

Queer Trauma, Paternal Loss, and Graphic Healing in Alison Bechdel's

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic

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Introduction

In this essay, I investigate the representation of inter-generationally transmitted queer trauma and paternal loss in Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, arguing for the potential offered by the comics medium for the display of what I perceive as Bechdel's attempt of healing.¹ Identifying a form of trauma that is subtle, embedded in structures of the everyday, and transmitted by Bruce Bechdel, to his daughter, Alison, I investigate the ways in which *Fun Home* also depicts the process of working through it via Bechdel's intertextual references to Oscar Wilde's aestheticism. I propose that these references produce 'queer temporalities' that allow the reconfiguration of space from the domain of the Gothic and the monstrous into a positive, artistic articulation of Bruce's closeted homosexuality. In revisiting her childhood and adolescent years, Bechdel reinterprets her family home as well as her distant, closeted father in an effort to come to terms with his loss. This reinterpretation is facilitated through her references to Wilde's life and art, traces from which she projects onto Bruce by portraying him as a fin-de-siècle Wildean aesthete. Through this portrayal, Bechdel offers her father, the life of the artist he had declined in favour of passing as a heterosexual father, reconciling with him via her adult wise take on him, and on his love for beauty, art(ifice) and literature.²

Trauma and Life Writing in Comics: Towards Graphic Healing

The depiction of trauma has been a stable theme in life narratives told via comics since the emergence of the genre in the US underground comix scene in the 1960s and 1970s.³ Art Spiegelman's landmark *Maus*, which signalled the legitimization of the genre and won the Pulitzer prize in 1992, attests to the suitability of comics for the expression of inter-generationally transmitted trauma. Narrating Holocaust survival as that was experienced by Vladek, an Auschwitz survivor, and Art, his son, Spiegelman chose to depict the Jews as mice, showing the nuanced potential of the (until recently) marginalized medium of comics for the telling of traumatic life stories.⁴ Indeed, Hillary Chute observes a 'peculiar relation' between 'the form of comics' and 'the expression of life stories', noting the medium's suitability particularly for traumatic narratives, since it can make 'literal the presence of the past by

disrupting spatial and temporal conventions to overlay or palimpsest past and present.’⁵ In *Graphic Women*, Chute also explains that because of their fragmented nature and their visual/verbal hybridity, comics can mediate the difficulties emerging from the unrepresentability and unspeakability of trauma.⁶

Meaning in comics is formed through combinations of visual and textual parts as well as through readers’ active participation in filling in the gaps between panels, otherwise known as gutters, in order to move from one narrative fragment to the next.⁷ Panels include visual images, speech balloons, narrators’ captions, and the visual embodiments of characters, like the autobiographical avatar in autobiographical comics.⁸ All these structural elements allow complex and nuanced representations of trauma because in comics ‘pictures are part of the writing and the drawing moves rather than merely illustrates the narrative [...]. Words and images create unsynthesized narrative tracks’ in which one part ‘is not redundant of the other.’⁹ In this chapter, I am interested in the ways in which the form of comics allows readers to identify traces of healing in addition to the representation of queer trauma in Bechdel’s graphic memoir. My aim is to point to the potential of the medium for the performance of what I would describe as an attempt of *graphic healing*, which is achieved, in *Fun Home*, through Bechdel’s intertextual references to Wilde’s life and art.

Scholarly criticism has acknowledged the healing effect of testimonial (life) writing, with Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub suggesting that in addition to recording historical events, testimonial literature can function as ‘the unsuspected medium of healing.’¹⁰ Similarly, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre introduces Post-World War I literary autobiographies as ‘narratives of crisis’ and ‘healing acts’ because they ‘address the central problems of finding words for the inexpressible, form for the chaotic, and a way out of isolation and despair back into human community through writing.’¹¹ Autobiography, she further adds, can be a means of ‘restructuring, redescribing, reevaluating, and remythologizing the world.’¹² Suzette A. Henke has introduced the term ‘scriptotherapy’ to refer to healing through writing in women’s life narratives.¹³ Such healing effects emerge from ‘the dual possibilities of performance and revision’ existing in life writing.¹⁴ When telling traumatic life stories, authors are involved, according to Chandler McEntyre, ‘in a wrestle “with words and meanings” that can be deeply regenerative’ since narration ‘is a way of purging guilt and pain, re-centering the self, and reconnecting with community.’¹⁵ Helen M. Buss explains that, because of this impact of trauma life narratives, readers ‘must work with [writers] as [...] psychoanalytic detective[s] with good grasp of historical and cultural contexts [as well as] the linguistic consequences of trauma’, to identify one’s move from the condition of being ‘possessed by the past, to a condition’ of

possessing it.¹⁶ For this end to be achieved, readers must be aware of their engagement with ‘a form of literature that claims to be testimony’, and thus, ‘more than a fictive contract.’¹⁷

Cartoonists rely on verbal as well as visual means to depict trauma and the journey through it. To identify the healing function of such texts, readers are therefore required to pay close attention to the meanings produced through a visual/verbal interplay, as the visual realm of a narrative often forms stories that complicate and enrich the verbal account of trauma, and vice versa. For instance, Phoebe Gloeckner and Lynda Barry incorporate, visually or verbally, elements from the genre of the fairy tale in their graphic memoirs, to invest their autobiographical subjects with agency over their pasts and in relation to their abusers, which they lacked during the occurrence of traumatic events.¹⁸ However, it is up to readers to trace, through their interpretative stance, the healing function of such references in relation to the trauma that is narrated. In *Fun Home* trauma is caused by the emotional and physical alienation existing between Alison and her father and by his eventual loss when he was hit by a truck four months after she came out to her family as a lesbian at the age of twenty. Alison suggests that Bruce’s death was not accidental, but a carefully planned suicidal act, connected to her own coming out and to the exposure of his closeted homosexuality by her mother upon her own sexual revelation (*FH*, 57-89).

Hence, the work of healing I trace in the book concerns the wounds that emerged from Bruce’s death and from the autobiographical subject’s childhood inability to approach her father and to connect with him physically as well as emotionally since his unspeakable secret triggered unpredictable behaviours that harmed their relationship. By choosing to lead a double life and to pass as a heterosexual family man, Bruce shows the injurious impact of ‘queer trauma’ on himself and on his family, and particularly his daughter.¹⁹ This type of trauma stems from the violence of compulsory heterosexuality, which according to Judith Butler renders some lives livable and grievable and others unlivable and ungrievable.²⁰ Gust A. Yep writes that compulsory heterosexuality operates as ‘the invisible center and the presumed bedrock of society, [...] the quintessential force creating, sustaining, and perpetuating the erasure, marginalization, disempowerment, and oppression of sexual others.’²¹ For this reason, individuals may internalise homophobia, injuring either themselves, via closeting processes and by passing as heterosexuals, or others, through hate crimes or by forcing them to conform to heteronormative standards.²²

Laura S. Brown explains that many queer people suffer oppression within their families because of their gender identification and/or sexuality. They may suffer betrayal by family members and society in general when they decide to come out, and in more extreme cases, they

may be vulnerable to the threat of hate crimes. Because of their daily exposure ‘to small doses of trauma’, queer individuals are thus more prone to psychological distress and behavioural dysfunctions.²³ In *Fun Home*, Bruce’s life choices embody both internalised and externalised symptoms of queer trauma. He chooses to repress his drives and to lead a double life as a heterosexual paterfamilias. He is largely unable to connect with his children and his wife, being constantly preoccupied with the restoration of the Gothic Revival family home, through which he channels his sexual frustration.²⁴ He is obsessed with maintaining the anachronistic beauty and perfection of the family’s dwelling place at the expense of his children, and he becomes inexplicably enraged and occasionally abusive when he suspects that they might have slightly displaced his art objects (See *FH*, 11, 18). The narrator explains that she and her brothers felt inferior to Bruce’s artificial items because, unlike those, they were imperfect. As she puts it, her father ‘treated his furniture like children, and his children like furniture.’ (*FH*, 14)

Alison’s lack of communication with her father as a child caused her feelings of embarrassment. In fact, the distance between and isolation of the Bechdel family members seem to have been the causes of the Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder she developed at the age of ten, and which she managed to overcome with her mother’s help (*FH*, 134-143). In addition to the ‘Arctic climate’ existing within the Bechdel family, Alison’s failure to perform a heteronormatively feminine bodily stylization put further strain on her relationship with Bruce, who is depicted in an ongoing effort to force onto her a conventional feminine gender representation during her childhood, adolescence and early adulthood – occasionally through threats of physical abuse (*FH*, 67). Bruce, then, projects (his) queer trauma onto Alison, who shares with him the inability to fit in the norms of compulsory heterosexuality. Unlike Bruce, who is closeted and ineffectively passes as a heterosexual father, Alison is open about her sexuality as well as her gender identification. Bechdel draws her autobiographical avatar as a tomboy during childhood and adolescence and as a masculine woman during adulthood.²⁵ In her refusal to pursue the gendered stylization her father desires for her, she drifts further away from him, thus, causing additional tension in their already troubled relationship.

Bruce’s preoccupation with the family house, and with art(ifice) and literature, in addition to his closeted secret, also function as barriers that disrupt the father/daughter relationship. Below, I look at the initial presentation of these barriers via Bechdel’s depiction of the Gothic Revival family home, focusing, particularly, on the representation of family roles and male homosexuality through Gothic literary and spatial elements. Then, I proceed to identify an attempt to reorient readers’ perspectives in ways that allow the reinterpretation of space as Bruce’s Wildean artwork, which articulates his closeted secret. Noting the ‘queer

temporalities' created via the comics medium and Bechdel's intertextual references to Wilde's life and art, I suggest that present and past conflate to allow the display of her adult wiser, reconciling perspective on her father. Ultimately, Bechdel seems to have made sense of her distant father and to have been able to tell his (unspeakable) life story by inscribing it on space. In the end, by presenting him 'with compassion and complexity', she offers him, in Ann Cvetkovitch's words, 'a different form of visibility', which poses a challenge on 'celebratory queer histories that threaten to erase more disturbing and unassimilable inheritances.'²⁶ *Fun Home* therefore shows the suitability of the comics medium for the representation of queer inter-generational relations.

Family relations, male homosexuality and the Gothic

When interviewed by Chute, Bechdel explained that, because of Bruce's elusiveness, she had to read and research a lot to make sense of his character and his death when she was writing *Fun Home*.²⁷ The richness of her 'archival turn' is evident in the amount of materials in the form of police reports, photographs, diary entries, personal letters and books she reproduces in the narrative.²⁸ In addition, and most importantly, it can be traced in how literary and artistic genres, styles and devices become essential for the development of the story, the expression of trauma and the identification of the narrative's healing impact. The first chapter of *Fun Home*, 'Old Father, Old Artificer', presents the child protagonist's perspective on an incomprehensible, aggressive, 'monstrous' father through the use of the Gothic, which can be traced in how the family home, family relations, as well as Bruce and his closeted secret are depicted. In her analysis of this chapter, Valerie Rohy notes that 'as *Fun Home* develops the child's difference from her father, the narrative voice resonates with that of a much younger Alison.'²⁹ Occasionally, she continues, it seems that 'the child's consciousness [enters] the narrator's voice', and then, 'Bechdel goes on to revise earlier assertions, including the notion of her father's falsehood on which Alison's identity and her view of the archive seem to depend.'³⁰ It is precisely the child's perspective on Bruce and his closeted secret, as embedded in the narrator's voice that becomes foregrounded through Bechdel's use of the Gothic for the expression of his closeted homosexuality within the domestic domain. This double perspective presents to readers an autobiographical subject that is possessed by the past.

In describing her father's obsessive preoccupation with the restoration of the Gothic Revival family home, the narrator explains that she and her brothers were perceived by Bruce as 'free labor' and 'extensions of his own body, like precision robot arms' that facilitated his work around the house (*FH*, 13). In addition to feeling that Bruce's objects were more valuable

for him than his children, Alison notes that as a child, she believed that all his ‘useless’ ornaments were lies, which ‘obscured function’ becoming ‘embellishments in the worst sense.’ (*FH*, 16) In chapter one, then, the child autobiographical avatar seems unable to feel at home in her family home and this has to do with Bruce’s tastes, which become expressed through his excessive, anachronistic home decoration. In parallel to her descriptions of the house, Alison mentions her father’s unpredictable mood swings, his inability to handle criticism well and her family’s incapability of showing affection for each other because they were not ‘physically expressive.’ (*FH*, 18-19) In her account of the embarrassment she felt upon her unsuccessful attempt to kiss her father goodnight once, the narrator explains that her feelings constituted ‘a tiny scale model of [Bruce’s] more fully developed self-loathing. His shame’, she adds, ‘inhabited our house as pervasively as the aromatic musk of aging mahogany. In fact, the meticulous, period interiors were expressly designed to conceal it. Mirrors, distracting bronzes, multiple doorways. Visitors often got lost upstairs.’ (*FH*, 20) The visual register offers readers access to the empty spaces of the house, with a panel presenting a confused old woman almost running into a mirror. In this way, Alison introduces domestic space as a labyrinth in which Bruce attempts to conceal both his secret and his feelings.³¹

This depiction of the family home becomes underscored through her description of her father as the mythical Daedalus, the ‘skilful artificer [and] mad scientist who [...] designed the famous labyrinth ... and who answered not to the laws of society, but to those of his craft.’ (*FH*, 6, 7) In the visual register of the text, Bruce is preoccupied with home decoration, while Alison declares her distaste for the pink flower-patterned wallpaper he chose for her room. The combination of the narrator’s reference to Daedalus and his labyrinth with the visual depiction of Bruce’s work in Bechdel family home guide readers to form a correlation between the two. Later, as Bruce is drawn beating one of Alison’s brothers because he was not able to hold the Christmas tree straight for long so that he could identify its perfect positioning, the narrator notes that like her father, ‘Daedalus, too, was indifferent to the human cost of his projects.’ (*FH*, 11) Daedalus, she continues, also betrayed the king by creating, upon the queen’s request, a ‘cow disguise’ that would help her ‘seduce the white bull.’ (*FH*, 11) The outcome of this ‘unnatural’ seduction was ‘a half-bull, half-man monster [that] inspired Daedalus’ greatest creation yet [;] the labyrinth – a maze of passages and rooms opening endlessly into one another,’ in which he ‘hid the Minotaur.’ (*FH*, 12) When Alison refers to the monstrous outcome of Pasiphae’s unnatural mating with the bull, the visual register shows the autobiographical avatar fearfully looking towards her enraged father, whose presence is visually captured through a black shadow threateningly directed towards her (fig.1).

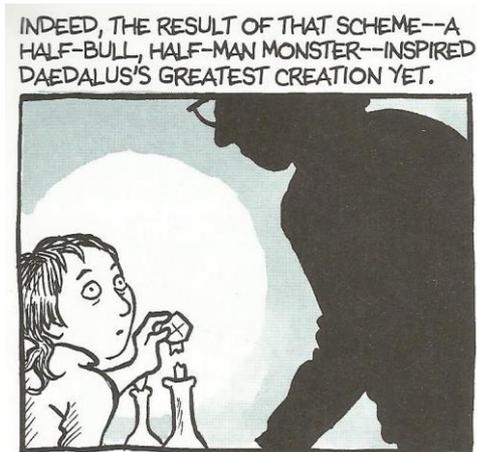


Figure 1: Panel 1, page 12 from: *FUN HOME: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel. Copyright © 2006 by Alison Bechdel. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

This graphic metaphor depicts Bruce's rage and dark secret as a hybrid monster. Like the Minotaur, Bruce's 'unnatural' closeted passion seems to have triggered the obsessive restoration of the Bechdel family home in which it is trapped as well as the rage he projects onto his children. As the narrator describes the youth who hopelessly attempted to escape Daedalus' labyrinth, the autobiographical avatar is drawn running, leaving the house and escaping Bruce's rage. As she walks away, Alison thinks about Daedalus' relationship with his son, Icarus, wondering whether he was 'really stricken with grief when Icarus fell into the sea or just disappointed by the design failure' of the wings he had created for him (*FH*, 12). In implicitly identifying with Icarus, the narrator once again mediates her inability to understand whether her father cared about his art(ificial) works more than he did for her and her brothers. The maze-like design of the family home, its Gothic Revival architectural style, the presentation of Bruce as a tyrannical father similar to Daedalus, and of his repressed, 'monstrous' closeted secret in parallel to the Minotaur, render the domestic domain a space of the Gothic, in which Alison is called to survive.³² In the first chapter of *Fun Home*, then, Bechdel's artistic choices and intertextual references seem to be driven by the need to depict her child autobiographical subject's discomfort with the family home and her father, which is mediated through the use of the Gothic.

Anne Williams explains that the conventions of the Gothic include 'a vulnerable and curious heroine; a wealthy arbitrary, and enigmatic hero/villain; and a grand mysterious dwelling concealing the violent, implicitly sexual secrets of this *homme fatal*.'³³ The Gothic, she proceeds, 'is overdetermined by structures of the [patriarchal] family', which re-appear in various components of the genre like 'the architecture of the haunted castle or house, [and] the experience of horror and terror.' (*FH*, 22, 87) In the case of *Fun Home*, the *homme fatal* is also

the tyrannical paterfamilias of the Gothic and the man distinguished by his double life, which is structured around the secret of his closeted homosexuality. Nevertheless, it is not homosexuality itself that haunts the Bechdel family home, but the shame, frustration and rage that emerge from its repression. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, the literary gothic explores ‘perverse secrets of sexuality’, and it operates as a ‘locus for the working-out of some of the terms by which nineteenth- and twentieth-century European culture has used homophobia to divide and manipulate the male-homosocial spectrum.’³⁴ It is also a genre that displays workings of the Oedipal family, like ‘the absolutes of licence and prohibition, [...], a fascinated proscription of sexual activity [and] an atmosphere dominated by the threat of violence between generations.’³⁵ In this sense, the child autobiographical avatar is not only trapped within her labyrinth-like Gothic Revival home that hides her father’s sexual secrets, but also, in a particular type of femininity, which Bruce imposes on her manifesting the father-to-daughter intergenerational transmission of queer trauma.

Judith Halberstam writes of the centrality of the monster in the Gothic, which ‘announces itself [...] as the place of corruption’ and sexual deviance.³⁶ Referring to the duality and the conflict staged within a single person in the Gothic, Halberstam analyses *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In Wilde’s book, Dorian’s portrait is monstrous because it reveals too much by becoming ‘a record of his life, his desires [and] his corruption, while he maintains his youth.’³⁷ *Fun Home* graphically employs these gothic elements to recreate Bruce’s passing, his double life, and its harmful impact on his family. In addition, it recreates Alison’s troubled relationship with her father, and the inter-generational transmission of queer trauma. Bruce becomes Daedalus, his repressed secret is presented as the Minotaur, and the house, like Dorian’s painting, tells too much by becoming a screen on which Bruce’s ‘lies’ and feelings are inscribed. Interestingly, Halberstam describes the literary Gothic in relation to the ‘ornamental excess’ of Gothic architecture, noting that both produce too much through their ‘rhetorical extravagance.’³⁸ In *Fun Home*, the Gothic Revival style of the family home, which Bruce obsessively restores, is meticulously reproduced by Bechdel herself, who also introduces a child protagonist that is trapped in it, being simultaneously terrified of her father’s monstrous, inexplicable behaviour. Nevertheless, as the narrative unfolds, Bechdel alters her perspective, distancing herself from her child self’s view of Bruce and reconfiguring the meaning of the house.

Halberstam explains that Dorian’s hidden self in *The Picture* is, similarly to Bruce’s, ‘a sexual’ and ‘decadent self [...] too much preoccupied with art, representation, and beauty, rather than life, experience, the common lot.’³⁹ During the fin-de-siècle, traits like ‘effeminacy,

sensuality, love of art, uselessness [and] idle leisured existence,' which previously characterized the 'corruption of aristocracy' came to 'stereotype homosexual behavior' according to Halberstam.⁴⁰ In Wilde's novel, Dorian's corruption is embodied in an artwork. His identity becomes written on the painting, which becomes 'equivalent to narrative.'⁴¹ By the end of the story, Dorian decides to destroy it with a knife. 'As it killed the painter', the narrator relates, the knife 'would [also] kill the painter's work, and all that it meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead [Dorian] would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and, without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace.'⁴² Art came to dominate Dorian's life and by 'murdering' the painting, he hoped to find peace. Eventually, however, the portrait was found intact, capturing his exquisite, youthful beauty, while 'lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage,' and so the darkness and ugliness of Dorian's life returned to his body.⁴³

The Picture illustrates Wilde's views on the superiority of art over nature as these are described in 'The Decay of Lying', where taking up the persona of Vivian, Wilde explains that art unveils nature's lack of design and ugliness. Art, he explains, 'takes life as part of its rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, [art] is absolutely indifferent to fact, [it] invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment,' making and unmaking worlds, and abiding to no laws.⁴⁴ In *The Picture*, the painting is what preserves eternal beauty as Dorian becomes, at the end, a grotesque, old, ugly spectacle. In 'The Decay', Vivian declares that the 'proper aim of art' is 'the telling of beautiful untrue things.'⁴⁵ For Wilde and his contemporaries, the untrue, the artificial, the unnatural, and the perverse found a locus for their expression not in nature, but in art and literature.⁴⁶ Fin-de-siècle aesthetes invented codes to express 'the love that dared not speak its name' through artistic and literary styles and devices, like, for instance, their use of flowers.⁴⁷ Art therefore allowed the articulation of unspeakable desires and identities against medical, scientific and legal discourses that pathologized and criminalized them.⁴⁸ It is through this subversive dimension of Wildean art that *Fun Home* shows Bechdel's attempt of *graphic healing*, allowing the reorientation of readers' perspectives on Bruce and the family home. This reorientation helps readers trace how Bechdel revises and ultimately undoes the Gothic dimension of her intimate space, her father and of his closeted secret.

Undoing the Gothic: Graphic Healing through Wilde's Aestheticism

Readers are guided to form correlations between Bruce and Wilde early in the narrative, when Alison describes him as an 'aesthete', and mentions that he 'appeared to be an ideal husband

and father' who nevertheless secretly 'had sex with teenage boys.' (*FH*, 15, 17) In addition, she explains that her father 'liked to imagine himself as a nineteenth century aristocrat' as Bruce is drawn sitting in his almost excessively decorated library, where he used to secretly seduce some of his young students (*FH*, 60). By referring to her father's appearance as an ideal husband and explaining that underneath this disguise lied his secret, the narrator evokes Wilde's eponymous play. Indeed, the penultimate chapter of *Fun Home* is entitled *The Ideal Husband*. The chapter contains a number of references to Wilde's plays and life in the depiction of the family home which functions as a spatial life-narrative and an artwork mirroring Bruce's life story. The blurring of the boundary between the fine and the applied arts that allows the interpretation of the domestic space as a work of art was common in the context of the Aesthetic Movement, which developed from the work of architects and designers in the nineteenth century and had Oscar Wilde and William Morris as its most significant representatives.⁴⁹ In *Fun Home*, Bruce's beautification of the domestic place and the preservation of its late-nineteenth century Gothic Revival style function as an anachronism that keeps alive, a century later, the core values of the movement which expanded from architectural design to the visual arts and literature through which Wilde and his contemporaries expressed homosexual desire.

While the inscription of male homosexuality on interior design and home decoration has remained largely unnoticed by critics, Michael Hatt describes 'the Aesthetic interior, the self-conscious creation of a beautiful home' as a means through which 'private (homosexual) desire and public self were integrated.'⁵⁰ He further suggests that the aesthete is reflected on the surfaces of his house and this is how the 'dialectic of self and space collapses into intrasubjectivity or narcissism.'⁵¹ The house emerges, therefore, as performative of the aesthete's homosexuality and it can be understood as an 'autotopography', a spatial autobiographical performance, a metaphorical writing of the self on space. Deirdre Heddon explains that 'the relationship between identity and place is one of mutual construction', noting that 'autotopography is writing place through self (and simultaneously writing self through place).'⁵² For Simon Trezise, 'autotopography' concerns both 'the territory we can touch and see and [...] the mind with which we respond to this territory.'⁵³ Thus, to perceive space as Bruce's autotopography has to do with a reader's understanding of Bruce as a Wildean artist and his/her approach to the (domestic) space beyond its utility, as an aesthetic artwork, and a spatial life narrative. In *Fun Home*, Bechdel's references to Wilde's life and art guide readers to change their perspective both on Bruce, who was previously depicted as a monstrous paterfamilias, and on the family home that was presented as the domain of the Gothic.

‘The Ideal Husband’ in *Fun Home* narrates the participation of Alison’s mother in a local production of Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Its title, however, refers to Bruce who has to attend a hearing at court after having been accused of buying beer to a minor, the seventeen-year old Mark, with whom he was also sexually involved (*FH*, 161). Although the narrator only speculates about Bruce’s relationship with Mark and his brother, Dave, she notes that in the end, like ‘Oscar Wilde who was condemned by the testimony of his rough trade’, her father too was exposed by the two brothers he knew (*FH*, 175). Similar references to Wilde’s life and plays appear in the diegetic realm of the Bechdel family story to enrich it. For instance, the narrator explains that as a child during her mother’s rehearsals, she took *The Importance* ‘at face value’ and her enjoyment remained ‘unencumbered by Wilde’s martyrology.’ (*FH*, 165) Going back to it as an adult, she knows that ‘right after *The Importance* opened [...] Wilde’s trials begun.’ (*FH*, 166) She is aware of Wilde’s relationship with Alfred Douglas and their trip to Algiers, where they ‘had been disporting themselves with the local boys.’⁵⁴ She also knows of the accusation for sodomy that Douglas’ father directed against Wilde, of the trials, and of Wilde’s imprisonment for ‘indecent acts’ (*FH*, 166). After relating this information, Alison explains that in *The Importance*, ‘illicit desire is encoded as a character’s uncontrollable gluttony’. Immediately after this, Bechdel offers readers visual access to her family home, where Bruce is drawn uncontrollably eating cucumber sandwiches (*FH*, 166). In this way, she guides readers to interpret Bruce’s behaviour, as depicted in the particular panel of *Fun Home*, similarly to how they would interpret gluttony in *The Importance*, that is, as a metaphorical mediation of his ‘illicit desire’.

It is precisely through these traces of the past in the diegetic present that ‘queer temporalities’ are formulated allowing readers to reinterpret Bruce and the family home beyond the monstrous and the Gothic. According to Carolyn Dinshaw, ‘queer temporalities’ refer to ‘the possibility of touching across time, [and] collapsing time through affective contact between marginalized people now and then.’⁵⁵ Dinshaw suggests that ‘with such queer historical touches we could form communities across time.’⁵⁶ This ‘refusal of linear historicism’, she suggests, has the potential to free us ‘to think further about multiple temporalities in the present.’⁵⁷ Sam McBean explains that the moments in which the past ‘touches’ the present in ways that expand it carry both an erotic and an affective element.⁵⁸ *Fun Home* performs this ‘erotic’ touching of the past on the present through Bechdel’s references to Wilde’s life and art in Bruce’s life story, which guide readers to decipher further layers of meaning within the *mise-en-scène* trauma narrative. Through this conflation, Bechdel also situates her work in the male homosexual literary and artistic canonical tradition to foreground

the healing possibilities emerging from her engagement with Wilde – her literary (fore)father. It is through this engagement that she can reclaim her biological father, Bruce, who shares with Wilde a common love for art(ifice) that poses itself against nature. The queer touch of the past on the diegetic present of *Fun Home* is located in Bruce’s love for art(ificial) beauty, in the anachronistic Gothic Revival style of the family home (which is among the most representative styles of the Aesthetic Movement), and in traces from Wilde’s plays and life in Bruce’s story. These elements help readers identify the artistic, rhetorical function of the family home in relation to Bruce’s secret.

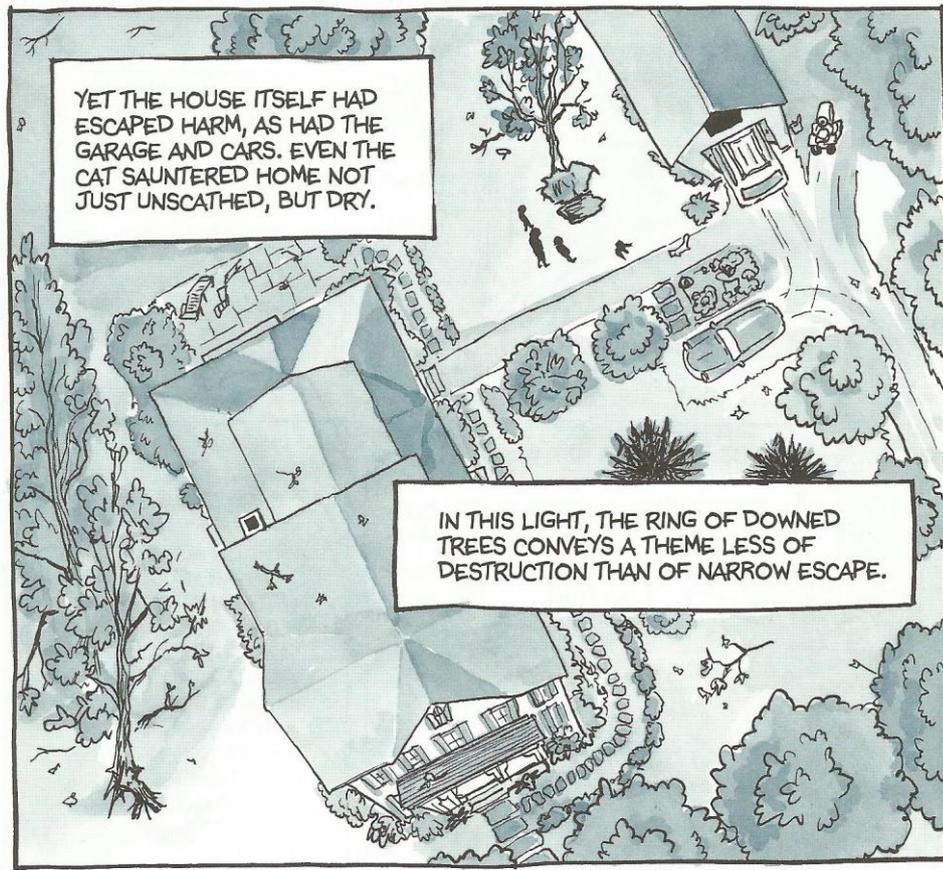
Commenting upon the outcome of the hearing, during which ‘the real accusation dared not speak its name’, Alison mentions a significant difference between Wilde and her father, despite the similarities of their stories. Bruce ‘did not provoke a burst of applause in the courtroom, as [the former] had, with an impassioned plea for the understanding of “such a great affection of an elder man for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan”’, she explains.⁵⁹ In this sense, Bruce becomes an anti-hero. His artistic work remained unknown during his lifetime. His own martyrology and trauma of passing as a heterosexual husband and father were never acknowledged. His life was marked by shame, which was transmitted to the rest of his family. Indeed, Bechdel herself explains that when she found the police report with Mark’s testimony she ‘felt triumphant as a writer [and a] researcher’ but ‘embarrassed as [a] daughter.’⁶⁰ In addition, she describes *Fun Home* as ‘a huge violation of [her] family’, when called to comment on her mother’s response to it.⁶¹ It seems then, that like Bruce and Dedalus, Bechdel too had to become disinterested in the human cost of her project, which functions as a homage to her father by acknowledging his martyrology and art. As she reinterprets *The Importance* in adulthood, she also reinterprets the Gothic Revival family home and her father, moving from being possessed by the past as a child, to possessing it, as an adult wiser cartoonist. In order to foreground her reconfiguration of the family home into Bruce’s Wildean ‘autotopography’, Bechdel incorporates in her graphic memoir the narration of a storm and the damage it left behind.

Among other things that interrupt and delay the story of Bruce’s legal entanglements, the narrator refers to a storm that damaged their garden. While this may be perceived as an interval that merely prolongs narrative development, I interpret it as purposefully positioned in the text since it foregrounds the function of domestic space as a Wildean artwork that reflects Bruce’s life story. In parallel to the surfacing of his secret through the court hearing, and her references to Wilde’s trials and plays, Alison mentions that the storm caused the trees that had sheltered the house for two centuries to fall down (*FH*, 178). In this context, Bechdel seems to

have turned to the language of horticulture and to flower imagery that were also used by Wilde and his contemporaries for the expression of male homosexual desire, to reconfigure the house beyond its utility as the family's dwelling place. Wilde himself famously had a green carnation attached to his buttonhole as a symbol for his homosexuality and in *Fun Home*, Bechdel's meticulous reproduction of Bruce's obsession with real and artificial flowers, inside and outside the house, is quite noticeable. Moreover, Bechdel chooses to structure the harm inflicted on Bruce and his family through the revelation of his secret during his hearing in parallel to the damage the storm caused to their garden, thus, mirroring Bruce's ordeals in the domestic space.

The narrator explains that the storm only harmed their garden, leaving the rest of the neighbourhood and their house untouched, indicating 'a narrow escape' from destruction, which she connects to another 'narrow escape [that] was yet to happen.' (*FH*, 180) With the latter, Alison refers to the magistrate's decision to drop charges against Bruce on the condition that he would 'complete six months of counselling'; a decision that led to Bruce and his family's escape from the harmful impact the exposure of his desire for adolescent boys would have on them (*FH*, 180). The function of the house as a spatial embodiment of Bruce's identity changes after Alison's coming out, when she found out, through her mother, about his past. Upon her return home after she had learned about her father, Alison finds her home uncanny with 'some crucial part of the structure [...] missing, like in dreams [she] would have later when termites had eaten through all the floor joists.' (*FH*, 216) While the domestic space was previously dominant in the visual register (fig. 2), after the revelation of Bruce's secret, the narrative perspective shifts and focuses on the actual people residing in the house (fig. 3).⁶²

NONE OF THE NEIGHBORS HAD MUCH DAMAGE. IT WAS AS IF A TORNADO HAD TOUCHED DOWN PRECISELY AT OUR ADDRESS.



YET THE HOUSE ITSELF HAD ESCAPED HARM, AS HAD THE GARAGE AND CARS. EVEN THE CAT SAUNTERED HOME NOT JUST UNSCATHED, BUT DRY.

IN THIS LIGHT, THE RING OF DOWNED TREES CONVEYS A THEME LESS OF DESTRUCTION THAN OF NARROW ESCAPE.

Figure 2: Panel 1, page 179 from: *FUN HOME: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel. Copyright © 2006 by Alison Bechdel. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

SOME CRUCIAL PART OF THE STRUCTURE SEEMED TO BE MISSING, LIKE IN DREAMS I WOULD HAVE LATER WHERE TERMITES HAD EATEN THROUGH ALL THE FLOOR JOISTS.



Figure 3: Panel 1, page 216 from: *FUN HOME: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel. Copyright © 2006 by Alison Bechdel. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

The autobiographical avatar returns home again after her father's death with her girlfriend Joan. During her stay there, she is depicted with her mother, Helen, and Joan in the library, where Bruce used to secretly seduce his male students (fig. 4). In her reading of the

scene, Janine Utell observes that, unlike Bruce's secret desires, 'Joan and Alison's erotic intimacy is [...] made visible in the family home.'⁶³ In addition to her same-sex desire, Alison's female masculinity is also visible and inscribed on her body. As the three women are sitting in the library, Helen gives Joan a book of poetry by Wallace Stevens. The narrator explains that 'over the years, [her] mother [had] given away or sold most of [Bruce's] library [beginning] immediately after the funeral, [by] bestowing a book on Joan.'⁶⁴ Consequently, Helen initiates the ending of the family home's rhetoric in revealing Bruce's secret to Alison. She is also the one who puts an end to the function of the house as a performance of his homosexuality. By giving away Bruce's books, by selling the library, and ultimately the house itself, Helen also eliminates its significance as an anachronistic Wildean artwork. As such, she begins what can be read as a healing process that would aid her recover from the past by unburdening herself from the strain that Bruce's homosexuality had inflicted on her. In this respect, Helen acts similarly to Dorian in *The Picture*, when he decides to destroy his painting in order to find peace.



Figure 4: Panel 1, page 82 from *FUN HOME: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel. Copyright © 2006 by Alison Bechdel. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Bechdel, however, preserves the queer rhetoric of space in *Fun Home* and, after Bruce's death, she shifts her attention away from the family home to his grave – his post-mortem dwelling place. The narrator notes that 'his headstone was an obelisk, a striking anachronism among the ungainly granite slabs in the new end of the cemetery.'⁶⁵ Like the family home, the tombstone is also distinguished through its anachronistic Gothic Revival style and the narrator implies that her father's homosexuality was demarcated through it, as the obelisk also has 'a shape that in life [Bruce] was unabashedly fixated on.'⁶⁵ If we are to consider the space occupied in the graveyard as a post-mortem embodiment of Bruce's

aestheticism and same-sex desire, then the arrangement of objects there, like in the Bechdel family home, is of utmost importance. Interestingly, when Alison visits her father's grave years after his death, she finds it 'desecrated with a cheesy flag, placed there by some well-meaning armed services organization.' (*FH*, 53) As she throws the flag away, the narrator's caption informs readers that 'there was some fleeting consolation in the sheer violence of [her] gesture', similar to the one she had felt years before, at her father's funeral, when she violently shook the funeral director's hand off her arm, on which he had placed it in an act of consolation (*FH*, 53).

In the second chapter, entitled 'A Happy Death', the final panel shows a distanced perspective of the graveyard with Alison lying on her father's grave after having thrown the flag away, restoring it to its ideal state (fig. 5). Similarly to the previous graveyard panels, this one also underscores the uniqueness of Bruce's tomb. The narrator's captions offer readers access to Alison's attempt to come to terms with her father's loss: 'My father really was down there, I told myself. Stuck in the mud for good this time.' (*FH*, 54) That her autobiographical avatar is drawn lying on Bruce's tomb functions as a means through which she can metaphorically 'touch' her father through space. In contrast to his life, which he led as a Wildean aesthete and a distant father obsessed with art(ificial) beauty, with his death, Bruce is forced to return to mud and, like Dorian, he becomes trapped in nature's lack of design. Nevertheless, his grave, his post-mortem anachronistic, Wildean artwork preserves in *Fun Home*, like Dorian's picture, the (un)truth of Bruce's life for those who can decipher it.

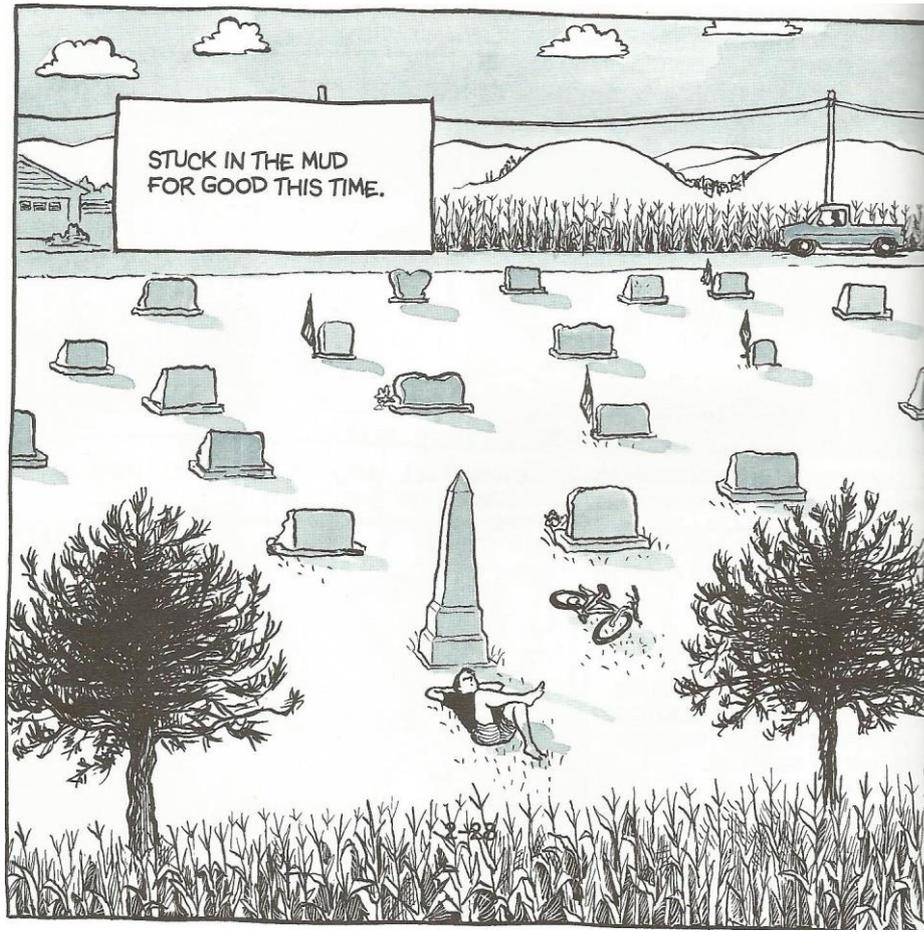


Figure 5: Panel 1, page 54: *FUN HOME: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel. Copyright © 2006 by Alison Bechdel. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Dana Luciano discusses the lipstick marks left by admirers' on Wilde's grave in France, a 'monument that speaks at once, of the affirmation and the repression of queer energies.'⁶⁶ While Wilde's biological descendants are annoyed by these marks, Luciano reads them as 'meant not to deface the memorial but to activate memory' manifesting what Dinshaw describes as 'the touch of time' and presenting an alternative form of contact with the past.⁶⁷ Space, then, becomes an intermediary entity between admirers and the lost object that is Wilde. In *Fun Home*, Bechdel's attentive reproduction of the spaces that Bruce inhabited, before and after his death, indicates that they have the same function for the father/daughter pair. The Gothic Revival Family home, in which Alison spent her childhood years, feeling trapped by its 'artificiality' and exaggerated ornamentation, transforms into Bruce's 'autotopography', as does his anachronistic grave. The centrality of the family home in the graphic memoir is also noted by Chute, who mentions that the book's first edition 'is configured like a home, with the exterior drawn' on its covers and the William Morris Chrysanthemum wallpaper pattern that decorated the walls of the Bechdel family home 'on the inside as endpapers.'⁶⁸

Coda

In her analysis of *Fun Home*, Chute writes that ‘the act of drawing’ bodies ‘as Bechdel does proposes both drawing and vision itself as a kind of touching the past. Comics,’ she notes, ‘is above all a haptic form [that demands] tactility.’⁶⁹ For Bechdel, comics function as means through which ‘to touch the subjects on which her work focuses and insert herself in their past.’⁷⁰ It is precisely through this ability to ‘touch’ Bruce, not only via the tactility of the comics medium, but also by preserving the details of his spatial, Wildean artworks, that *Fun Home* performs Bechdel’s attempt of healing and her act of homage to her father. Through her use of comics and by infusing the medium with intertextual references to Wilde’s art and life, Bechdel demonstrates the potential the genre offers in relation to the representation of queer lives, spaces and temporalities, and of the working through of inter-generationally transmitted queer trauma. The violence of compulsory heterosexuality, which injured the father/daughter pair and was initially mediated via the use of the Gothic and the monstrous, becomes undone through Bechdel’s adult wiser perspective on her father and what she presents as his spatial Wildean artworks. Her performance of ‘the queer touch of time’ allows her to work through trauma and loss, and to positively reconfigure those same spaces and attitudes that alienated the young autobiographical avatar from her father, performing her attempt of *graphic healing*.

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Notes

¹ For some of the scholarly investigations of the representation of queer trauma in *Fun Home*, see Jennifer Lemberg, 'Closing the Gap in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*', *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36.1-2 (2008): 129-40; Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative & Contemporary Comics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 175-217; H  l  ne Tison, 'Loss, Revision, Translation: Re-Membering the Father's Fragmented Self in Alison Bechdel's Graphic Memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*', *Studies in the Novel* 47.3 (2015): 346-64.

² The narrator in *Fun Home* explains that during her family's trip to Europe when she was a child, she 'cemented the unspoken compact with [her parents] that [she] would never get married [and] that [she] would carry on to live the artist's life they had each abdicated' in order to get married and have a family. Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 73. Hereafter abbreviated as *FH*, with page number in the text. In the graphic memoir there are references to her mother's artistic interests, for instance, in acting. In this essay I am focusing on Bechdel's negotiation of Bruce's artistic tendencies, which are not as explicitly mentioned, apart from the description of his obsessive preoccupation with house restoration and his reading of literature and books about art.

³ See Chute, *Graphic Women*, 13-27.

⁴ For an analysis of inter-generationally transmitted trauma in *Maus*, see Marianne Hirsch, 'Mourning and Postmemory', in *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*, ed. Michael Chaney (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 17-44.

⁵ Hillary L. Chute, 'Comics Form and Narrating Lives', *Profession* 11 (2011): 108.

⁶ Chute, *Graphic Women*, 3.

⁷ Scott McCloud describes the readers' move from panel to panel by filling in the gaps as a process whereby closure is provided. Elizabeth el Refaie also notes that the 'gappiness' of comics requires reader participation in meaning formation. See Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 67; Elisabeth el Refaie, *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures* (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 2012), 183.

⁸ The term 'autobiographical avatar' refers to the visually structured self in graphic memoirs. See Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 169.

⁹ Chute, 'Comics Form', 108.

¹⁰ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 9.

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- ¹¹ Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *A Healing Art: Regeneration through Autobiography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), x.
- ¹² Chandler McEntyre, 5.
- ¹³ See Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), xviii-xix.
- ¹⁴ Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy, eds., 'Introduction', in *Writing and Healing: Towards an Informed Practice* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers, 2000), 7.
- ¹⁵ Chandler McEntyre, ix.
- ¹⁶ Helen M. Buss, *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women* (Toronto: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002), 140.
- ¹⁷ Buss, *Repossessing the World*, 139.
- ¹⁸ My previous work concerns the reparative uses of intertextuality in relation to childhood (sexual) trauma in Phoebe Gloeckner and Lynda Barry's graphic memoirs. For some examples, see Olga Michael, 'Excavating Childhood: Fairy Tales, Monsters and Abuse Survival in Lynda Barry's *What It Is*,' *a/b: Auto/biography Studies* 32.3 (2017): 541-66; Olga Michael, 'Graphic Autofiction and the Visualization of Trauma in Lynda Barry and Phoebe Gloeckner's Graphic Memoirs', in *Autofiction in English*, ed. Hywel Dix (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 105-25; Olga Michael, 'The Other Narratives of Sexual Abuse in Phoebe Gloeckner's *A Child's Life and Other Stories*', *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 9.3 (2018): 229-50.
- ¹⁹ Laura S. Brown, 'Sexuality, Lies, and Loss', *Journal of Trauma Practice* 2.2 (2003): 66.
- ²⁰ For Butler's elaboration on this, see Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004), 17-19.
- ²¹ Gust A. Yep, 'The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies', *Journal of Homosexuality* 45.2-4 (2003): 18.
- ²² Yep, 'The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies', 18-26.
- ²³ Brown, 'Sexuality, Lies, and Loss', 63.
- ²⁴ This is suggested by Alison in *Fun Home*, particularly, when she describes her father's passion for the restoration of the house as 'libidinal [,] manic [and] martyred.' See *FH*, 7.
- ²⁵ For an analysis of female masculinity, see Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 1-44.
- ²⁶ Ann Cvetkovich, 'Drawing the Archive in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*', *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36.1-2 (2008): 125, 126.
- ²⁷ See Hillary L. Chute, 'An Interview with Alison Bechdel', *Modern Fiction Studies* 54.4 (2006): 1005.
- ²⁸ Jared Gardner notes that this 'archival turn' has been a prevailing tendency in contemporary graphic memoirs. See Jared Gardner, 'Archives, Collectors, and the New Media Work of Comics', *Modern Fiction Studies* 52 (2006): 788.
- ²⁹ Valerie Rohy, 'In the Queer Archive: *Fun Home*', *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.3 (2010): 347.
- ³⁰ Rohy, 'In the Queer Archive', 348.
- ³¹ Critics have discussed the role of the family home as a screen that veils Bruce's homosexuality through its association with heteronormative family life. See H el ene Tison, 'Drag as Metaphor and the Quest for Meaning in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*', *GRAAT* 1 (2007): 26-39; Ariela Freedman, 'Drawing on Modernism in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*', *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.4 (2009): 131; Robin Lydenberg, 'Under Construction Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*', *European Journal of English Studies* 16.1 (2012): 61.
- ³² Bechdel's descriptions of playing in the funeral home run by her father that was next to their home, her references to bats entering her home, and the parallelism of her family with the Addams family accentuate the Gothic attribute of her domestic life and space. In fact, the narrator explains that in a photograph depicting her in 'a black velvet dress [her] father had wrestled [her] into, [she] appear[s] to be in mourning', but also, identical to Wednesday Addams. See *FH*, 34-35.
- ³³ Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: The Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 38.
- ³⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 90.
- ³⁵ Kosofsky Sedgwick, 91.
- ³⁶ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 54, 56.
- ³⁷ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 57.
- ³⁸ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 54.
- ³⁹ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 66.
- ⁴⁰ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 66.
- ⁴¹ Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 74.
- ⁴² Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 187.
- ⁴³ Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 188.

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- ⁴⁴ Oscar Wilde, *Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905), 3.
- ⁴⁵ Wilde, *Intentions*, 22.
- ⁴⁶ For discussions on the expression of homosexuality through art and literature during the fin-de-siècle see Ed Cohen, 'Writing Gone Wilde: Homoerotic Desire in the Closet of Representation', in *Critical Essays on Oscar Wilde*, ed. Reginia Gagnier (New York: Macmillan, 1991): 68-87; Reginia Gagnier, ed., 'Sexuality, the Public, and the Art World', in *Critical Essays on Oscar Wilde* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 23-67.
- ⁴⁷ For elaborations on this, see Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky, *Epistemology of the Closet* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 4; Alison Syme, *A Touch of Blossom: John Sargent and the Queen Flora of Fin-de-Siècle Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 4-12.
- ⁴⁸ For an analysis of the medicalization and criminalization of the homosexual, see Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, Vol. 1, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998), 17-43.
- ⁴⁹ Elisabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: A Prelude to Art Nouveau* (London: Elek, 1969), 13.
- ⁵⁰ Michael Hatt, 'Space, Surface, Self: Homosexuality and the Aesthetic Interior', *Visual Culture in Britain* 8.1 (2007): 105.
- ⁵¹ Hatt, 'Space, Surface, Self', 117.
- ⁵² Deirdre Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 90.
- ⁵³ Simon Trezise, *The West Country as a Literary Invention: Putting Fiction in Its Place* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 13.
- ⁵⁴ Trezise, *The West Country as a Literary Invention*, 13.
- ⁵⁵ Carolyn Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 13.2-3 (2007): 178.
- ⁵⁶ Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities', 178.
- ⁵⁷ Dinshaw et al., 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities', 178.
- ⁵⁸ Sam McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities* (London: Routledge, 2016), 12. Elizabeth Freeman also discusses 'the bonds of love, not only attachments in the here and now but also those forged across both spatial and temporal barriers' through 'queer temporalities.' See Elizabeth Freeman, 'Time Binds, Or, Erotohistoriography', *Social Text* 23.3-4 (2005): 61.
- ⁵⁹ McBean, *Feminism's Queer Temporalities*, 180.
- ⁶⁰ Chute, 'Interview', 1006.
- ⁶¹ Chute, 'Interview', 1009.
- ⁶² For the alterations in narrative perspective, see *FH*, 177-79, 216.
- ⁶³ Janine Utell, 'Intimacies in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*: The Case of Joan', *The Comics Grid* (2011): np.
- ⁶⁴ In Alison Bechdel's second graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother: A Family Drama*, which focuses on her problematic relationship with her mother during her adulthood, Bruce and the family home are not mentioned, apart from a passing reference to the fact that her mother sold the house seven years after Bruce's death. See Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), 236.
- ⁶⁵ For discussions on the popularity of the obelisk during the fin-de-siècle as part of the Gothic Revival Trend of the Aesthetic movement in commemorative arts, see Richard V. Francaviglia, 'The Cemetery as an Evolving Cultural Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61. 3 (2005): 501; Peggy McDowell and Richard Meyer, *The Revival Styles in American Memorial Art* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994), 134-44.
- ⁶⁶ Diana Luciano, 'Nostalgia for an Age Yet to Come: Velvet Goldmine's Queer Archive', in *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, eds. Ellen L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 121.
- ⁶⁷ Luciano, 'Nostalgia for an Age Yet to Come', 122-23.
- ⁶⁸ Chute, 'Interview', 1008.
- ⁶⁹ Chute, 'Comics Form', 112.
- ⁷⁰ Chute, 'Comics Form', 113.