

The Materiality of Intertextuality: the Figure of the Shadow in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

Izabela Sobczak

ORCID: 0000-0001-7167-5767

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Shortly after the publication of *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* in 2006, Alison Bechdel became one of the most renowned comic book authors, although her work, which is not so much a personal, but above all an artistic coming-out, is also a *bona fide* literary masterpiece. The cartoonist has been hailed as the new Nabokov, who can tell the story of a family in words and pictures.¹ The #1 *New York Times* bestselling book, *Fun Home* is a comic-book autobiography in which Bechdel examines her life. Growing up in the modern world, she tries to discover her personal, gender, and sexual identities, and this process of self-discovery begins with a difficult relationship with her father. *Fun Home* has been praised by literary critics for its intertextual references to the great modernist writers, including James Joyce, Albert Camus,

¹ "If Vladimir Nabokov had been a lesbian feminist graphic novelist, he might have produced something like this witty, erudite memoir", in: *Ms. Magazine*, 2006 (spring). *Fun Home* was also reviewed in *The Times* (16 Nov. 2006) by M. Reynolds and (25 Nov. 2006) by Neel Mukherjee, *Salon.com* (4 Jun. 2006) by D. Wolk, and in *USA Today*, *LA Times*, and *The Stranger*.

Scott Fitzgerald, Colette, and Marcel Proust. Bechdel incorporates literary references into the visual and verbal narrative, to which Leszek Karczewski refers as the strategy of revealing and hiding.²

Bechdel uses intertextuality not so much to challenge cultural codes or to locate her writing in the modernist canon, but to find the space in literature to tell her personal story. When Alison learns that her father had affairs with men, she has already come out to her family. She discovers her sexual orientation through the books she has read, many of which were recommended to her by her father. As an English teacher and literature lover, Bruce Bechdel, whose suicide is discussed in the first panels of the comic book, uses literature as the main means of communication; it is the Bechdel's private code. In the process of reading Bruce's favorite books, primarily Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Alison is looking for traces of her own and her father's subjectivity. This (literary) search is realized in the graphic and textual layer of the comic book.

The reader, Bechdel herself, looks at her reflection in the work, watching her, as Gillian Whitlock puts it, avatar,³ but also discovers transposed and translucent palimpsest-like signs of Proust. Flowers, plants, and bouquets that Bruce arranges (p. 92),⁴ lilacs at which he looks longingly (p. 92), the fact that he is often drawn from the side,⁵ but also numerous photographs constitute a specific kind of intertextuality⁶ – graphic, or rather intersemiotic – suspended between Proust's word and Bechdel's image. The nature of graphics, images, which consists primarily in, as Alva Nöe puts it, presence-as-absence (making something that does not exist appear before our eyes), is extremely direct. As such, it is something “more” and something more sensual than a mere description.⁷ The comic book becomes a materialized version of the word, not only because it relies on individual textual and graphic panels, but also because of its spatial and temporal arrangement. The comic book does not only play with images, but also with the white empty spaces between them, which makes the reader “progress” through the narrative almost as if they were strolling through the streets of a city whose model they are looking at.⁸ Such a view of comics as a model gives rise to a new type of intertextuality that is more than just a narrative tool.

² Leszek Karczewski, “Komiksiara z suchymi oczami. Fun Home Alison Bechdel jako krypto-bio-grafia,” in *Literatura prze-pisana 2. Od zapomnianych teorii do kryminału*, ed. Agnieszka Izdebska, Agnieszka Przybyszewska, and Danuta Szajnert (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016), 136.

³ G. Whitlock refers to an autobiographical comics that was drawn and written by a single author as “autographics.” She refers to the graphic representation of the author in an autobiographical comics as an “avatar.” Gillian Whitlock, “Autographics: The seeing ‘I’ of the comics,” *MFS - Modern Fiction Studies* 52, no. 4 (2006): 965–979.

⁴ Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, 2015.

⁵ Proust often describes Albertine as seen from the side, see: Marcel Proust, *The captive, the fugitive*, trans. D. J. Enright and Terence Kilmartin, vol. 5 (London: Vintage, 2000), 57.

⁶ On intertextuality beyond the text see: Ryszard Nycz, “Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy,” in *Tekstowy świat: poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 1995), 83–84.

⁷ See Alva Nöe, *Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge [Estados Unidos]; London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 83–86. “Presence-as-absence” is one of the most important features of images and photos. On crossing the boundaries of the physical world by the comics and its sensual character see also: Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York, NY: William Morrow, HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 26–59.

⁸ On the concept of the gutter see: McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66. The term “model” to describe the literary world of Bruno Schulz was first used by Paweł Tomczok, “The Reality of the Intermediary,” *Forum Poetyki*, no. 15–16 (zima/wiosna 2019): 6–21.

When we compare how Proust creates his outstanding seven-volume work with the way in which Bechdel creates her seven-chapter comic book, we should look not only at text, which has been traditionally regarded as the space of intertextuality, but also at word and image. As regards the latter, the figure of the shadow is the most important reference to Proust's work.

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On the final page of chapter four, Bechdel writes about a sense of loss that is experienced during translation. Referring to two English translations of Proust's work, *Remembrance of Things Past* and the more recent *In Search of Lost Time*, the author states that the true meaning of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and the double meaning of the word *perdu*, has been lost in translation.⁹ "What's lost in translation is the complexity of loss itself," Bechdel writes, and underneath we see two panels with drawn photographs (p. 120). One photograph shows Bechdel's father, wearing a woman's bathing suit. In the next two photographs, arranged next to each other, we see Bruce sunbathing on the roof of a dorm and Alison, who looks remarkably similar to her father. However, according to the narrator, they only share "the pained grin, the flexible wrists, (...) the angle of shadow falling across our faces" (p. 120). Undoubtedly, the figure of the shadow has been used deliberately – the words quoted above end the chapter titled, expressly, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower."¹⁰

The metaphor of the shadow, crucial for describing the father-daughter relationship, can be read in two ways. The picture of Bruce in a swimsuit, posing gracefully, which opens and closes the chapter, seems to suggest that it is Bruce himself who is associated with the girls from Balbec described by Proust, while the daughter remains (grows up), like a translation in relation to the original text, (in) the shadow of her own father. Bechdel, however, wears a mask of the shadow also as an artist. As the author, the narrator, and the protagonist, she is a complex entity – she is both textual and graphic, external and internal, bodily and textual. She is sylleptic, as Nycz puts it,¹¹ or, as Whitlock claims, she is an avatar. Or perhaps she is a shadow, which, as Hans Belting argues, "is both the affirmation and the negation of the body, it both denotes and obscures the body."¹² Such an approach would correspond to the construction of the Proustian subject. As Maurice Blanchot writes,

the time of the narrative, when, although he says "I," it is no longer the real Proust or the writer Proust who has the ability to speak, but their metamorphosis into that *shadow* that is the narrator turned into a "character" of the book, the one who in the story writes a story that is the work itself, and produces in his turn other metamorphoses of himself that are the different "I's" whose experiences he recounts.¹³

⁹ Bechdel observes that *perdu* "means not just lost but ruined, undone, wasted, wrecked, and spoiled," p. 119.

¹⁰ "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower" is the translation of James Grieve. The canonical translation of C. K. Moncrieff, "Within a Budding Grove," does not mention the shadow, which was important for both Proust and Bechdel (*l'ombre* in the French original title *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*).

¹¹ Ryszard Nycz, "'Tropy' 'ja': koncepcje podmiotowości w literaturze polskiej ostatniego stulecia," *Teksty Drugie* 26, no. 2 (1994): 7–27.

¹² Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images Picture, Medium, Body.*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton, NJ); Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 128.

¹³ Maurice Blanchot, "The Experience of Proust," in *The book to come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 15.

The formula of the shadow informs the creation of the “I” as the subject and the object of the story for both Proust and Bechdel. The shadow points to the body and thus, as a category, represents the subject in the textual and graphic work. Given the visual context, the shadow is even more telling – it is both a sign of materiality and material in itself (if we consider light, shading, the line). In comics, the shadow does not only function at the meta level (as in literature), but it becomes a visual sign.

In *Fun Home*, the memory of the shadow is also referred to in the narrative. Especially in the context of Bruce’s obsession with color. When young Alison is filling in the *Wind in the Willows* coloring book, intending to color the gypsy caravan with her favorite blue crayon, her father exclaims: “What are you doing? That’s the canary-colored caravan!” Then, he takes his daughter’s place and continues “Here. I’ll do the rest in yellow, and your blue side will be in shadow” (pp. 130-131). Again, the figure of the shadow seems to be the place which Bruce assigns to his daughter. This “crayonic tour de force,” as Alison puts it, seems to be stuck in Alison’s mind – as an independent artist, she creates a work that is devoid of color. In the comic’s poetics of black and white, *Fun Home* relies on shadow imaging. In the context of Bruce’s obsession with color, the last frame of chapter five is particularly interesting. Father and daughter are standing on the porch and looking at the sky (p. 150). The evening sky, as we can see in the panel, is animated by “the infinite gradations of color in a fine sunset.” Bruce is fascinated with the view. Therefore, we can treat *Fun Home*’s black and white color palette as a kind of rebellion against the “crayonic tour de force,” especially since Bechdel has admitted in one of the interviews that she gave up color because of her father’s obsession.¹⁴ We should also comment on the figures of Bruce and Alison: they are standing in the shadow of their porch and looking at the sky; painted in black, they literally turn into shadows, but at the same time, lined up side by side, their bodies and genders become indistinguishable; they are similar, because they are nothing but an image. And as Belting points out, the image, and the shadow as a natural image, defies the body: “only in images we free ourselves from our bodies, from which we distance ourselves in the gaze.”¹⁵

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According to Belting, the natural distance to the body is created after death. The corpse is no longer the body. Lifeless, it becomes a formula for the image of the body, a representation of what it once was. It is only “the shadow soul.”¹⁶ Belting’s metaphor of the shadow soul, associated with Plato, can also be adapted to psychological analysis. Respectively, the word *psyche* may be defined in relation to certain aspects of human internal life. In Jungian psychology, the shadow means the dark side of our psyche, “the negative side of our personality,” which is rooted primarily in emotions (in Freudian psychology, the shadow is associated with the concept of *id*).¹⁷ We banish negative, immoral, and unwanted personality traits to the sphere of

¹⁴See Alison Bechdel, *Alison Bechdel: Conversations*, ed. Rachel R Martin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 53.

¹⁵Bechdel, 32, 225.

¹⁶Bechdel, 120.(emphasis mine, IS).

¹⁷Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, trans. Richard F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 10.

the shadow. Nevertheless, similarly to the actual shadow, we cannot escape from the shadow of the psyche; while we may not acknowledge it, it is with us at all times. However, similarly to the physical shadow, it can only be seen from the right angle and in the right light, which for Jung was associated with “a little self-criticism.”¹⁸

Importantly, the shadow is an archetype (along with the *anima* and the *animus*), which in Jungian psychology always stems from the collective unconscious.¹⁹ This means that the shadow also embraces character traits and behaviors that we reject, because they do not comply with social norms, as a result of external judgments or cultural disapproval. Given these aspects, it is worth paying attention to the shadow of Bruce Bechdel’s personality. Relegated into the shadow sphere as immoral and socially unacceptable, homosexual desires become an unconscious and unwanted component of the father’s *psyche*, which disrupts the creation of the subject’s coherent identity. And the act of self-knowledge requires moral firmness. As Jung writes, “[t]o become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance.”²⁰ Resistance provokes projections. If we are afraid to come to terms with our personality traits, we often project them onto other people. The cold and distant manner with which Bruce treats his daughter can be read as a sign of his projection; Bruce recognizes in Alison homosexual desires, which he associates with the “dark” aspects of his own personality. Similarly, disgust for the practices of Albertina and Baron de Charlus could result from Marcel’s (or even Proust’s) unacknowledged homoerotic desires. However, for Proust, the shadow carries still other meanings. Let me quote a passage in which the protagonist sees Albertina for the first time:

If we thought that the eyes of a girls like that were merely two glittering sequins of mica, we should not be athirst to know her and to unite her life with ours. But we feel that what shines in those reflecting discs is not due solely to their material composition; that it is, unknown to us, the dark shadows of the ideas that the creature is conceiving, relative to the people and places that she knows – the turf of racecourses, the sand of cycling tracks over which (...) she would have drawn me after her (...) more seductive than she of the Persian paradise – the shadows, too, of the home to which she will presently return, of the plans that she is forming or that others have formed for her; and above all that it is she, with her desires, her sympathies, her revulsions, her obscure and incessant will.²¹

For the protagonist, the eyes are reflecting discs in which the soul is visible as shadows, be it the “dark shadows” of the female psyche (desires, seductive sexuality) or “the shadows of the home” which may be read as an expression of longing, “desires,” and “sympathies.” The shadow becomes the intermediary of the human, unknowable, *psyche*. Importantly, the

¹⁸Jung, 10.

¹⁹Jung, 8.

²⁰Jung, 8.

²¹Marcel Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, trans. James Grieve (New York: Penguin, 2005), 287. (emphasis mine, IS). Proust also writes about “shadows” in the original: *es noires ombres des idées* (“the dark shadows of the ideas”), *les ombres aussi de la maison* (“the shadows, too, of the home”), in: Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps perdu. Tome 2, A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs. 1-2-3* (Paris: Gallimard, 1919), 39.

shadows of the soul are not solely dark; on the contrary, they are representative of human desires and dreams.

It seems that Bechdel, as a mature artist, is aware of all the shadows with which her childhood world was filled. And, in keeping with Jungian psychology, she does not recognize them as negative forces. When she draws herself in the moments of self-knowledge, wandering around the house and taking pictures, shadow imagery penetrates the panels (pp. 128-129). Alison points out that a nearby factory pollutes a local river and the sky. And although the effects of environmental pollution are deadly, they become a source of beauty in Bechdel's narrative: the dust makes the sky turn different colors and the stream is so clean that it sparkles. The narrator writes: "Wading in this fishless creek and swooning at the salmon sky, I learned firsthand that most elemental of all ironies" (p. 129). Alison acknowledges the shadows, which were created as a result of hidden "pollution." Importantly, in one of the panels (p. 128), the world around Alison is hidden in the shadow, and on the next page (p. 129), the world is illuminated, and Alison is in the shadow. To draw on Jung, Alison integrates the shadow, which in this case is not only the darker side of man, but of the world as well. The polluted world (filled with shadows) may also be read as a positive vision. When Alison becomes a shadow, she accepts the dark traits of her personality, because she knows that she shares these qualities with her father. She understands that when tamed, these traits can help her build a coherent identity.

IV

The connection between father and daughter in the shadow of their corresponding *psyche* is visually rendered in the comics: when Alison and Bruce are standing on the porch and watching the evening sky, their bodies "connect" – they are both drawn as black silhouettes. Indistinct, colorless, dark, as shadows, they reflect one another. As a peculiar translation of the original, Alison is the shadow of her father, but Bruce, who is drawn in the comics as a black-and-white figure of the double, is also the shadow of his daughter or, since he is dead, a shadow in itself. As Belting observes,

The dead no longer *throw* a shadow because they have become shadows themselves. What is true of the shadow is also true of the image: it cannot produce images of its own the way the body does, because it already *is* an image, and as such is different from the body.²²

The motif of the image which supposedly "cannot produce images of its own" is especially interesting in the context of another medium present in *Fun Home*, namely photography. Photography and the action of taking photographs play an important role in the comic book (pp. 120, 128-129). Also, the photographs of father and daughter discussed above, in which Alison and Bruce strike a similar pose (p. 120), as well as the photograph of Roy, a gardener, Alison's babysitter, and Bruce's lover, which occupies a prominent position in the comics as a 2-page spread (pp. 100-101), confirm that for Bechdel, representation in the form of photography has a special meaning. The use of photography in *Fun Home* is especially interesting,

²²Belting, *An Anthropology of Images Picture, Medium, Body.*, 131.

since all photographs have been reproduced in drawing. As such, they constitute an integral part of Bechdel's style (i.e. they do not differ from other images), and at the same time, they are a "tangible" proof of presence.²³ This is particularly important when we acknowledge that at times, the ontological status of the protagonist/father is questioned, because he is featured in the story only as a memory; Bruce dies under the wheels of a truck and his alleged suicide is constantly questioned in the comic book. The father as a figure of the shadow without the body, an image that has no reference in reality, can be most faithfully rendered by means of photography. "If photography is a trace of reality," Anna Jarmuszkiewicz writes, "it is also the medium of the body that produces its shadow. However, temporal linearity causes the shadow to separate from the body in photography. It is produced when the photograph is taken, but disappears after it is developed and when it is viewed."²⁴ Indeed, as Roland Barthes further observes, "it is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funeral immobility, at the very heart of the moving world (...)." ²⁵ Barthes points to the seemingly positive feature of photography, the fact that it "always carries its referent with itself," yet he also emphasizes the importance of "funeral immobility." Both quotes draw attention to the same aspect: photography is inseparable from Thanatos; it immobilizes the body, kills its movement, and deprives it of the shadow, which is a testimony to its materiality and a sign of life. The moving body that is arrested in a dead image is easily associated with death. It is worth paying attention to this aspect in the context of Bechdel's father.

Shadow and photography have a similar mimetic value, because they are nothing more than a likeness of the world; they correspond to reality in a similar way (and, to draw on Charles Peirce, we can say that they are icons) and at the same time they can be read as evidence of the physical presence of matter (they are also indices).²⁶ Shadow and photography, which only mediate reality, intertwine in *In Search of Lost Time* primarily in the context of memory. It is memory that elicits shadows in Proust's work:

Sometimes, by a defect in the internal lightning which spoiled the success of the play, the appearance of my memories on the stage giving me the illusion of real life, I really believed that I had arranged to meet Albertine, that I was seeing her again, but then I found myself incapable of advancing to meet her, of uttering the words which I meant to say to her, to rekindle in order to see her the torch that had been quenched (...) as suddenly one sees in the faulty projection of a magic lantern a huge shadow, which ought not to be visible, obliterate the figures on the slide, which is the shadow of the lantern itself, or that of the operator.²⁷

²³As Roland Barthes observes, "in the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see. (...) the *This* [is] (...) the *Tuché*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real (...)." In: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: The Noonday Press, 2012), 4.

²⁴Anna Jarmuszkiewicz, "Widma i emanacje. O związkach fotografii ze śmiercią. Przypadek Prousta," in *Pomiędzy tożsamością a obrazem*, ed. Miłosz Markiewicz et al. (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 88.

²⁵Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5–6.

²⁶To learn more about the connections between photography and shadow see: Victor Ieronim Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 105–17.

²⁷Marcel Proust, *The Sweet Cheat Gone: In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff, vol. 6 (U.K.: Dodo Press, 2005), 108.

Memory, seen as a picture full of light and shadow, appears before the protagonist's eyes almost right here and right now. It is an image, a revelation, that is always seen for the first time; however, this image, right here and right now, seen for the first time, attests the presence of "in the past," just as "here" is also "there."²⁸ This is what photography is: it is the overlapping of two temporal and spatial planes, both equally real and, seemingly, present. In *In Search of Lost Time*, memory also works in a photographic way: "What we take in the presence of the beloved object, is merely a negative film; we develop it later, when we are at home, and have once again found at our disposal that inner darkroom, the entrance to which is barred to us so long as we are with other people."²⁹ What we remember, what is "in the past," is like an undeveloped photograph; only reality develops the photograph, releasing the memory that appears before our eyes. Remembering is like developing a film, which, however, would not be possible if it were not for the signs of the present, such as the madeleine, the smell of hawthorn, or the uneven pavement slabs; the present and the past are inextricably linked, because in the now, the past, which relies on memory, becomes tangible and real.³⁰

Both Proust and Bechdel create their stories in accordance with the principles that govern memory and these principles are reflected in imagery. Bechdel builds the fourth chapter, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower," in a manner very similar to Proust – she refers not only to images, but also to photography, and the play of light and shadow. As such, Bechdel recreates the ways in which the past functions. Indeed, the past is still alive and present in description (when it comes to Proust's novel) and, what is very important, in imagery (when it comes to Bechdel's comic book). Bechdel illustrates what Proust "paints" only with words. This in-depth intertextual relation is based on creative and artistic actions (i.e. developing negatives from memory) and it also plays a crucial role in discovering the truth. The photographs and images of the past, arranged side by side, are signs of the father's secret; they are a testimony to the reality that, for young Alison, was still imperceptible at the time. Although Alison lived in that reality and experienced it, it could only reveal itself in the now, and that only through mediation; it is in the pictures, and not in the experience, that the true reality is revealed.³¹

Let me at this point quote Michał Paweł Markowski who in the preface to his book *Pragnienie Obecności* [The Desire of Presence] writes:

The limits of visibility coincide with the limits of representation. This means that representation makes visible what it presents. And *vice versa*: what is not presented escapes from the space of visibility, because we cannot see what has not been presented.³²

²⁸Blanchot, "The Experience of Proust," 15.

²⁹Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, 345.

³⁰See: Jarmuszkiewicz, "Widma i emanacje. O związkach fotografii ze śmiercią. Przypadek Prousta," 96.

³¹Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and signs*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Athlone, 2000), 95–105.

³²Michał Paweł Markowski, "Prolog. Ikony i idole," in *Pragnienie obecności: Filozofie reprezentacji od Platona do Kartezjusza* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 1999), 21.

Bruce's homosexuality, which was invisible during Alison's childhood, is revealed in the panels of the comic book: in Bruce's looks, in the image of his tanned body, in the face painted with pomade, in the photograph in which we see him in a women's bathing suit, and in the photographs which show Roy, a gardener and Bruce's lover, half-naked. It is only when experiences encoded in thoughts are materially represented that they become visible. It seems that it was easier to achieve for Bechdel, who uses graphics tools, than for Proust; her story is devoid of excess words. Also, as a comic book, *Fun Home* is endowed with an additional dimension of visibility that is missing in the novel. I refer here to empty, white, graphic and not graphic spaces between panels (gutters). As Markowski observes, "[t]here are no representations that would not demand to be looked at; there is no gaze that would not wander among various representations."³³ However, when we think of such a specific medium as comics, we cannot fully agree with the above statement: after all, the eyes of the reader who is reading *Fun Home* may wander in-between panels. Although it does not illustrate anything, white, partly covered and partly exposed, becomes visible; and its visibility differs from the kind of visibility associated with the pages of the novel, because the spatial dimension plays a more important role than the temporal dimension. In addition, in the comics, it is in these empty places, in the gutters, that the story materializes; the gutter stands for movement and change, while the panels tend to be associated with stillness. It enhances the sensual character of the comics and intensifies the experience of its tangibility, thanks to which the medium becomes a model: it creates a unified whole, which, although material and spatial, still acts as a kind of an image, a representation.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³³Markowski, 21.

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KEYWORDS

coics

INTERTEXTUALITY

ABSTRACT:

In this article, I analyse Alison Bechdel's autobiographical comic book *Fun Home*, which has been hailed as the "event of the year," demonstrating how its visual and verbal layer engages in an intertextual dialogue with Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Proust's novel becomes the main intermediary in the double (graphic and textual) coding of gender, sexual, and artistic identity of the main characters: father and daughter. The figure of the shadow plays a crucial role in description and representation; adapted from Jungian psychoanalysis, it takes on a more material and less abstract character in Bechdel's comic book.

IDENTITY

psychoanalysis

PROUST

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Izabela Sobczak graduated with a degree in Polish Philology from the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology at AMU in 2019. Her research interests include connections between modernist and contemporary literature, autobiography, feminism, and gender studies, which she discusses, *inter alia*, in her article “Męski głos niewieści: Z dzienniczka kobiety Wincentego Kosiakiewicza” [Feminine Voice of Men: Wincenty Kosiakiewicz’s *From the Diary of a Woman*], *Prace Literaturoznawcze*, 2018, no. 6. She is also the co-author of the interview “Czego nie widać” [What Can’t Be Seen] *Guliwer: Czasopismo o książce dla dziecka*, 2018, no. 4. |