



# Relevant hetoric

“I Know You:” Burkean Identification,  
Invitational Rhetoric, and *Fun Home*’s  
“Ring of Keys”



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## Introduction



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The musical *Fun Home*, written by Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron, and based on the autobiographical graphic novel by Alison Bechdel, opened on Broadway on April 19, 2015.<sup>1</sup> The show has been described as “a poignant and raw exploration [of] family, memory, sexuality, and suicide.”<sup>2</sup> Through a series of flashbacks, the show chronicles Bechdel’s childhood and adolescence in a small eastern Pennsylvania town, her own coming-out as a lesbian in college, and her coming to terms with her closeted gay father’s suicide. The musical won 5 Tony Awards in 2015, including Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical and Best Original Score, making Kron and Tesori the first ever all-female writing team to win a Tony Award for a musical’s score.<sup>3</sup> The musical also attracted attention on an international level; on March 1, 2016, fifteen United Nations ambassadors attended a performance of *Fun Home*.<sup>4</sup> Robert Viagas notes that then-United States Ambassador Samantha Power said that the show “brings home the challenges that LGBTI [people] are facing everyday around the world” and that it “bring[s] this all home in a way that resolutions and statements never can.”<sup>5</sup> Though the Broadway production closed on September 10, 2016 after a 17-month run and 583 performances,<sup>6</sup> *Fun Home* lives on through a U.S. national tour,<sup>7</sup> and there has

been speculation that the show may be produced in London in the near future.<sup>8</sup>

Though *Fun Home* has been praised for its LGBTQ+ focus and for its breaking of the proverbial glass ceiling on Broadway, the musical is far more than one woman's coming-out story. Michael Cer-veris, who won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical for his portrayal of Alison's father Bruce, explained: "Our show



is about home. It's about finding who you are."<sup>9</sup> Paulson and Healy of the *New York Times* make note of *Fun Home*'s "universal themes – father-daughter relationships, memory, and reconciliation."<sup>10</sup> In addition to being groundbreaking, the show has widespread appeal, as evidenced by its popularity.

Gordon Cox of *Variety* observes that "if *Fun Home* has a signature tune, it's 'Ring of Keys.'"<sup>11</sup> The song, which was the first complete song written by Kron and Tesori, has been described as "a sweet ode sung to a butch lesbian by a 10-year-old girl on the brink of discovering her sexuality."<sup>12</sup> The song, sung by Small Alison in the show, occurs in a diner when a delivery woman walks in and Alison immediately feels a connection with her, despite never speaking to the woman. Kron initially was hesitant to write the song for fear of stereotyping the delivery woman, but Tesori argued that "Ring of Keys" "is a song of identification that is a turning moment when you think you're an alien and you hear someone else say, 'Oh, me too.' It's a game-changer for Alison."<sup>13</sup> Kron agreed



to write the lyrics, avoiding “trigger words.”<sup>14</sup> She notes, “I couldn’t say ‘combat boots’ or ‘steel-toed boots.’ I had to comb through and look for words that would both be completely what Alison is seeing, and feel like emotionally where her attention landed and that would also give the audience a picture of this woman that didn’t have a bunch of stereotypical associations.”<sup>15</sup> The resulting song became the number *Fun Home* showcased at the Tony Awards in 2015.

As Jeanine Tesori notes, “Ring of Keys” is a “song of identification.”<sup>16</sup> Through a rhetorical analysis of the song’s lyrics and sheet music, I discuss first, how the character of Small Alison identifies with a woman she sees at a diner in “Ring of Keys;” and second, how the song creates Burkean identification between audience members and Small Alison. Finally, I argue that “Ring of Keys”



is an example of invitational rhetoric’s “offering perspective” and advance a Burkean perspective (via identification and consubstantiality) to further our understanding of how invitational rhetoric can transcend persuasion.

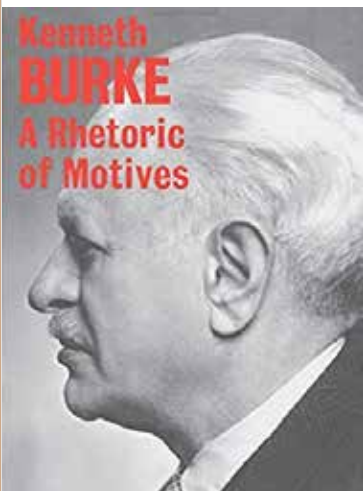
### *Burkean Identification and Invitational Rhetoric*

Identification, developed by Kenneth Burke, has been used by communication scholars to study various rhetorical texts and communicative settings, including political communication,<sup>17</sup> religious communication,<sup>18</sup> instructional communication,<sup>19</sup> organizational communication,<sup>20</sup> the rhetoric of social class,<sup>21</sup> and musical theatre.<sup>22</sup> Arthur Y. Smith refers to identification as “a practical



strategy that will aid the student of oral interpretation in the task of discovering meaning.”<sup>23</sup> In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke explains identification in the following terms:

“A is not identical with his colleague B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are, or is persuaded to believe so.”<sup>24</sup>



Burke further notes that consubstantiality results from identification, observing that “to identify A with B is to make A ‘consubstantial’ with B.”<sup>25</sup> He explains that “in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes that make them consubstantial.”<sup>26</sup> In short, Burkean identification states that if audience members see similarities between themselves and a

rhetor, they are more likely to be persuaded by that rhetor’s statements. Dennis G. Day explains that identification is a “strategy which encompasses the whole area of language usage for the purposes of inducement to action or attitude”<sup>27</sup> and that we experience both “identification *of* and identification *with*.”<sup>28</sup> He suggests that “identification *of* refers to the act of indicating consubstantiality,” while “identification *with* refers to the *affective relationship* which results from the perception of consubstantiality.”<sup>29</sup> In responding to Day’s essay on Burkean identification, John W. Kirk contends that identification is “not only a process



which operates in rhetoric; it is also the structure which gives it order.”<sup>30</sup> Burke explains that identification is both “a deliberate device, as when the politician seeks to identify himself with his audience” and “an end, as when people earnestly yearn to identify themselves with some group or other.”<sup>31</sup>

Burke also states that identification cannot occur without division, explaining that “identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, in order for a person to identify with someone, he/she/ze must also find himself/herself/zirself different from someone else. For example, if I identify with



Democrats, I am also noting that I do not identify with Republicans, Libertarians, members of the Green Party, or Communists. Borrowman and Kmetz observe that identification and division are both “natural processes and rhetorical choices.”<sup>33</sup>

Division is essential to the creation of identification and consubstantiality. As Thomas B. Harte explains, “if identification did not imply division...rhetoric would not be necessary.”<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Burke observes a connection between identification and persuasion. He states:

A speaker persuades an audience by use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker’s interests; and the speaker draws on identification





of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ('consubstantiality') and communication (the nature of the rhetoric as 'addressed').<sup>35</sup>

Day further explains that Burke regards identification "as the *only* means of achieving persuasion."<sup>36</sup> In their article critiquing Burkean theory by juxtaposing it with the theories of feminist and Wiccan activist Starhawk, Foss and Griffin go so far as to argue that for Burke, "*identification, consubstantiality, and persuasion* are synonymous."<sup>37</sup>

However, not every act of communication seeks to persuade an audience. Can identification be used for other purposes? Narrative, in particular, is a type of communicative act that can be used for many different purposes (persuasion among them). Narrative theorists Walter R. Fisher and Jerome Bruner suggest that stories always have meanings,<sup>38</sup> but, as Fisher points out, these meanings need not be persuasive.<sup>39</sup> Bruner further explains that "the story form is a transparent window on reality<sup>40</sup>" and that "we cling to narrative models of reality and use them to shape our everyday experience."<sup>41</sup> He argues that stories allow us to "construct, reconstruct, and in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow."<sup>42</sup> Additionally, William K. Rawlins notes that "narratives allow us to dramatize the situated actions of specific characters



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occurring across time; they perform temporally mediated activities and experiences.”<sup>43</sup> He further suggests that stories help us to construct friendships, to maintain friendships, to make achievements in our friendships, and understand meanings in our lives in the lives of our friends.<sup>44</sup>



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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zaphedingbat/3591108120>

In his article in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Kevin McClure explores how Burkean identification can be re-conceptualized in the narrative paradigm to allow us to understand how narratives can “foster beliefs, attitudes, and actions.”<sup>45</sup>

In order to illustrate narrative identification, McClure uses Young Earth Creationism as a case study, noting how believers in Young Earth Creationism may disregard scientific evidence in order to find consubstantiality with a particular community through an ancient narrative. McClure’s work suggests that, when re-envisioned through the narrative paradigm, identification need not be used to persuade audiences. Instead, he argues that “through the processes of identification, narratives constitute the stories by which we live and make our ‘realities’ and choices.”<sup>46</sup>

Stories can also exemplify what Foss and Griffin term “invitational rhetoric.”<sup>47</sup> They explain that “invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does.”<sup>48</sup> Invitational rhetoric is “an effort to create a rhetoric built on a new set of values and



to envision how such a rhetoric might work for both women and men in ways that contribute to the transformation of our culture.”<sup>49</sup> Arguing that rhetoric as persuasion reflects a patriarchal bias, “establishes the power of the rhetor over others,”<sup>50</sup> and “devalues the lives and perspectives of others,”<sup>51</sup> Foss and Griffin propose a “new rhetoric”<sup>52</sup> based on the “feminist principles”<sup>53</sup> of equality, immanent value, and self-determination.<sup>54</sup> In their defense of invitational rhetoric, Bone, Griffin and Scholz explain that invitational rhetoric was designed to be viewed as “a communication exchange in which participants create a new environment where growth and change can occur but where changing others is neither the ultimate goal nor the criterion for success in the interaction.”<sup>55</sup> Foss and Griffin note that invitational rhetoric is characterized by openness and that its goal is understanding.<sup>56</sup> They suggest that invitational rhetoric takes on two primary forms: the offering perspective, “a mode by which rhetors put forward for consideration their perspectives;”<sup>57</sup> and the creation of external conditions, which “allows others to present their perspectives in an atmosphere of respect and equality.”<sup>58</sup> While change is not the purpose of invitational rhetoric, audience members may find themselves transformed through it.<sup>59</sup> Foss and Foss explain that transformation as “growth or change”<sup>60</sup> may be significant or subtle and that it can only happen through some sort of interaction; in other words, transformation requires communication. While Foss, Griffin and Foss believe





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that invitational rhetoric is useful in many situations, they are careful to note that it is not “an ideal”<sup>61</sup> and they do not suggest that it “be used on all occasions.”<sup>62</sup>

Though some scholars have noted shortcomings in invitational rhetoric, particularly in regards to its treatment of persuasion as rhetoric,

because it has been interpreted as being gender-specific, or because it is viewed as impractical,<sup>63</sup> other scholars have found it a useful rhetorical tool.<sup>64</sup> Ryan and Natalie extend invitational rhetoric in order to incorporate Gadamer’s hermeneutics and feminist standpoint theory, noting that “invitational rhetoric is...an overlooked and underutilized theory that has incredible power.”<sup>65</sup> Petre links invitational rhetoric and epideictic rhetoric in women’s political speeches delivered at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, noting how the use of narratives aided in creating identification between the speakers and their audiences.<sup>66</sup> Cavin uses invitational rhetoric to study peace activist Elise’s Boulding’s rhetoric, as illustrated through her speeches and interviews.<sup>67</sup> Other scholars have applied invitational rhetoric to feminist mediator and activist Jane Addams’ “A Modern Lear” speech,<sup>68</sup> civil rights activist and humanitarian Mary McLeod Bethune’s “What Does Democracy Mean to Me?” speech,<sup>69</sup> writer and artist Lynda Barry’s writing manual *What It Is*,<sup>70</sup> and the rhetoric of civil rights organizer Ella Baker.<sup>71</sup>

Though scholars have yet to study how Burkean identification and invitational rhetoric may function in the same rhetorical text, Mallin and Anderson recognize a connection between the two theoretical constructs in their article in *Argumentation and Advocacy* that attempts to bring to light new conceptualizations of argument.<sup>72</sup> Observing the cooperative nature of invitational rhetoric, they note that “Burkean identification emphasizes the importance of overcoming division, and therefore can serve as a productive foundation for cooperative modes of argument.”<sup>73</sup> In the analysis of *Fun Home*’s “Ring of Keys,” I demonstrate how Burkean identification is used as a means of invitational rhetoric in the text that invites theatre-goers to observe another person’s experience, the offering, and reflect on how their own experiences, the perspective, may have impacted their lives.

*Analysis of “Ring of Keys”  
Through Burkean Identification and Invitational Rhetoric*

“Ring of Keys” takes place in the last quarter of the musical; it is a flashback, a memory that Alison is recalling as she attempts to write her graphic novel. Small Alison is about nine years old<sup>74</sup> and she is sitting in a diner with



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her father Bruce, who has just chastised her for taking her barrette out of her hair. He tells her, “It keeps the hair out of your eyes,” to which she retorts, “so would a crew cut.”<sup>75</sup>

The conversation provides foreshadowing to the song “Ring of Keys,” in which Small Alison identifies with a woman with “short hair.”<sup>76</sup> When Bruce asks Small Alison to find the



waitress, Lorna, to ask for coffee, Small Alison is “stopped in her tracks” when a delivery woman arrives with a cart of packages. The script refers to the woman as “an old-school butch.”<sup>77</sup>

Small Alison begins singing about her experience. The song, written in the key of E-major and in 6/8 time, has a medium-paced tempo that allows for a sort of Sprechstimme, or speak-singing, style of performance. This tempo and style allow for ease in storytelling, perhaps more so than a slower, ballad tempo or longer, sustained notes would permit. The song’s instrumentation also contributes to its storytelling style; primarily featuring guitar and percussion, the song has a folk sound, and folk music is often associated with storytelling.



At first, Small Alison struggles to find words to describe what she is feeling:

“Someone just came in the door  
Like no one I ever saw before  
I feel –  
I feel –  
I don’t know where you came from  
I wish I did, I feel so dumb  
I feel – “<sup>78</sup>



Her struggle to find the right words to express the connection she feels with the woman is something to which many people can relate. People often struggle to find words to express themselves when they are overcome with emotion. Small Alison's difficulty in explaining what she is experiencing may create consubstantiality with audience members who have experienced similar difficulties.

Small Alison then finds words to describe the woman and expresses them through the song's chorus:

“Your swagger and your bearing

And the just-right clothes you're wearing

Your short hair and your dungarees and your lace-up boots

And your keys, oh, your ring of keys”<sup>79</sup>

The music crescendos during the chorus to underscore its importance. Here, Small Alison describes what she admires about the woman, but perhaps more importantly, what she recognizes in herself. When placed in context with her previous conversation with her father about the barrette and the crew cut, the chorus of “Ring of Keys” represents Small Alison's recognition of consubstantiality. As Burke observes in his essay “The Calling of the Tune,” identification is



“one's way of seeing one's reflection in the social mirror.”<sup>80</sup> In “Ring of Keys,” Small Alison sees her own “reflection in the social mirror;” she realizes that she is like the woman with the ring of keys in both manner and appearance.

The “ring of keys” symbolism appears several times throughout the musical. The first reference is in the opening scene of the musical, when adult Alison finds a ring of keys in a box and attempts to draw it. The “Rings of Keys” song is the second reference, and the final reference occurs when Alison remembers her last conversation with her father, when he “flip[s] his car keys”<sup>81</sup> and asks

her if she would like to drive. Each reference represents an important moment in Alison’s journey to understand herself and events in her life. In the first reference, she is embarking on the journey of understanding her father’s suicide, and whether her coming-out had an impact on him. In the final reference, she relives her last conversation with her



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father in hopes of making sense of it, where she desperately tries to remember “the moment [she’s] forgetting where [he] sees [her].”<sup>82</sup> In the “Ring of Keys” song, she begins to understand her sexual orientation and herself as a person. Burke notes that “in forming ideas of our personal identity, we spontaneously identify ourselves with family, nation, political or cultural cause, church, and so on.”<sup>83</sup> In “Ring of Keys,” Small Alison forms ideas of her own personal identity by identifying herself with the woman with the ring of keys. Her “Ring of Keys” moment is an epiphany, when she truly begins to understand something about herself.



In the second verse, Small Alison recognizes that the woman is breaking societal norms, and that she identifies with the woman for doing so. She continues to struggle to find words to express her sense of consubstantiality:



“I thought it was supposed to be wrong  
 But you seem okay with being strong  
 I want –  
 You’re so –  
 It’s probably conceited to say  
 But I think we’re alike in a certain way  
 I, um – ”<sup>84</sup>

As the music builds to a more complicated orchestration with additional instrumentation, Small Alison realizes that this woman exudes a quality that goes against what she has been taught is appropriate for a woman – strength. Acknowledging the societal expectation that it is “wrong” to be “strong,” she attempts to explain that she admires the quality in the woman with the ring of keys and wants to be like her. As Burke explains, “two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an ‘identification’ that does not deny their distinctness.”<sup>85</sup> Small Alison identifies with the woman based on the shared principle of strength. Her recognition of identification comes to the



forefront when she sings, “I think we’re alike in a certain way.”<sup>86</sup> Though she may not completely understand why she sees this consubstantiality, she recognizes its existence.

Audience members may also experience their own moments of identification as they watch Small Alison experience her “Ring of Keys” moment. They may recall moments when they realized that they exhibited a particular trait or had a particular talent. It may have been similar to Small Alison’s “Ring of Keys” moment, when a person caused them to see a similar trait in themselves,



or it may have been a moment where an activity or circumstance caused their self-realization. “Ring of Keys” provides identification on two levels: Small Alison experiences identification with the woman

with the ring of keys, and audience members may experience identification by seeing a part of themselves in Small Alison’s story.

The music once again swells to a crescendo in the chorus, emphasizing the traits with which Small Alison identifies. The music then decrescendos for the song’s bridge, where Small Alison sings,

“Do you feel my heart saying hi?

In this whole luncheonette, why am I the only one

Who sees you’re beautiful...

No.

I mean...handsome”<sup>87</sup>



The song's bridge offers minimal accompaniment and a slower tempo in comparison to the rest of the song to show the sensitivity of the moment. The phrase "Do you feel my heart saying hi?" innocently suggests consubstantiality; Small Alison feels an emotional connection with the woman, though they have never spoken to one another. In the song's bridge, she also connects to the woman by noticing the division that exists; Small Alison observes that she is the only one "who sees [the woman is] beautiful," correcting herself quickly to use the masculine form of the word, "handsome." As Burke notes, "identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division."<sup>88</sup> Small Alison feels consubstantiality with the woman with the ring of keys because she sees something that makes the two of them different from everyone else in the diner. This division creates identification for Small Alison. It may also create identification for audience members who may recall a similar situation that they experienced themselves; they may have met someone at some point in their lives who caused them to realize that they were different from other people they knew.



The song then returns to its full tempo and volume as Small Alison repeats the chorus one final time. She ends the song by repeating a single phrase three times: "I know you." On the very last "I know you," Small Alison slows her tempo to drive her point home. She may have never

spoken to the woman, but she feels a connection with her because of her demeanor and appearance. The song portrays identification in an innocent way, which may cause audience members to recall an identification experience from their own childhood.



When juxtaposed with Small Alison's conversation with her father just before the song, "Ring of Keys" implies division as well. Bruce serves both an identification function and a division function for Alison throughout the musical. At the beginning of the show, adult Alison writes (and says aloud), "Caption: My dad and I were exactly alike;"<sup>89</sup> a few seconds later, she rethinks this and writes, "Caption: My dad and I were *nothing* alike."<sup>90</sup> Bruce and Alison are very different characters with very different interests, though they share some qualities: both are intelligent, artistic, and, most importantly for the plot of the musical, both are homosexual. This provides tension throughout the course of the musical, as Alison questions if her coming-out influenced her closeted father's suicide, or if the two events are mutually exclusive and only coincidentally occurred at roughly the same time. While at times in the musical, Bruce serves an identification function for Alison, in the "Ring of Keys" scene, he represents division. His focus on her barrette in an attempt to make his daughter look more feminine is something Alison rejects; consequently, when she sees the woman with the ring of keys appearing more masculine in her "short hair," "dungarees," and "lace-up boots," she immediately identifies with her. Small

Alison finds herself in a state of consubstantiality with the woman she has never met, and divided from her father. This scene may cause some audience members to reflect on the people in their lives who provide similar functions for them; both people with whom they identify and people from whom they are divided.



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“Ring of Keys” also exemplifies Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric through an offering perspective. Foss and Griffin define an offering perspective as “the giving of expression to a perspective without advocating its support or seeking its acceptance.”<sup>91</sup> In “Ring of Keys,” Small Alison tells her story of identification without the intention of seeking support or acceptance. Foss and Griffin further explain that “in offering, rhetors tell what they currently know or understand; they present their vision of the world and show how it looks and works for them.”<sup>92</sup> “Ring of Keys” presents one person’s experience with identification; audience members are merely asked to listen to Small Alison’s tale of self-discovery.

The offering in “Ring of Keys” is “a story not told as a means of supporting or achieving some other end but as an end to itself.”<sup>93</sup>

Utilizing the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination, “Ring of Keys” shows no trace of “dominance and elitism”<sup>94</sup> in either the connection between Small Alison and the woman with the ring of keys, or



in the relationship between Small Alison and the audience. There is no power structure in place; it is simply one character sharing her story of self-discovery. “Ring of Keys” recognizes the “immanent value of all living beings.”<sup>95</sup> In the song, Small Alison identifies with the woman with the ring of keys and sees value in her. Similarly, the audience is encouraged to experience this same identification in their own unique ways through the song, likely seeing value in these different connections. There is no judgment on what constitutes a “ring of keys” moment and what does not. Foss and Griffin note that in invitational rhetoric, the offering perspective involves a “willingness to yield.”<sup>96</sup> Audience members may have different “ring of keys” moments of self-discovery, offering immanent value in all of these moments. Nor is there judgment should an audience member NOT recall such an experience in his or her life. “Ring of Keys” is only one song in *Fun Home*, and an audience member who fails to identify with this song may still identify with other moments and other messages in the musical. Nevertheless, “Ring of Keys” encourages audience members to reflect on their own moment that holds value to them, but it does not require them to recall such a moment in order to understand or appreciate the musical.



“Ring of Keys” allows for both Small Alison as a character and the audience to experience self-determination, which “allows individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives.”<sup>97</sup> Small Alison is empowered by her “Ring of Keys” moment; she







identifies with the woman with the ring of keys, and knows that she wants to look, dress, and be like this woman. Because “Ring of Keys” encourages audience members to recall their own self-realization experiences, but does not dictate what sort of experience audience members should recall (or even require them to recall such a moment at all), the song promotes “self-determination,” allowing audience members to select which memories with which they wish to connect.



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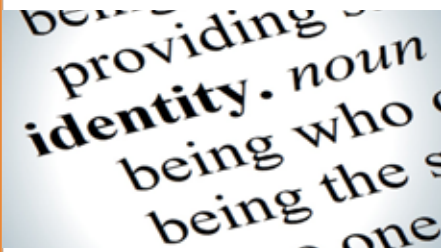
### *Conclusion*

This rhetorical analysis of the lyrics, sheet music, and cast recording of *Fun Home*’s “Ring of Keys” demonstrates how Burkean identification can be used for a purpose other than persuasion. As Petre observes in her study on invitational rhetoric and epideictic rhetoric, “perceiving rhetoric as an invitation represents one way for rhetors to identify with their audiences.”<sup>98</sup> “Ring of Keys” invites audience members to recall a moment of consubstantiality in their own individual lives, but it does not attempt to persuade audience members to change or uphold beliefs or to take action of any kind. My analysis notes that “Ring of Keys” uses Burkean identification through invitational rhetoric in order to invite “the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does.”<sup>99</sup>





One might argue that “Ring of Keys” seeks to “normalize” homosexuality or that it is persuading audience members that LGBTQ+ people are “just like” cisgender heterosexual people. This view unfairly limits *Fun Home*’s messages and Alison Bechdel’s story. *Fun Home* is the story of one woman’s early life and Bechdel’s sexual orientation is only one part of her story. “Ring of Keys”



celebrates a moment in time where someone learns something about her identity, but it is not limited to the discovery or understanding of one’s sexual orientation. While some audience members may identify with the recognition of one’s sexual orientation in the song, others may identify with it on other levels, perhaps recalling their own personal moment when they realized they were a talented artist, a strong leader, or a religious individual. They may reflect on their own “Ring of Keys” moment when they realized that they loved playing soccer, or wished to become a nurse, or felt a connection to their ancestry. “Ring of Keys” does not seek to persuade; it simply invites the audience to experience a moment in Bechdel’s life and encourages them to reflect on their own personal “Ring of Keys” moment. In his critique of Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric, Richard Fulkerson argues that “viewpoints are shared, exchanged, understood, and respected, but no action is taken” and that “at most, an individual auditor might hear something he/she liked and choose to alter his/her behavior.”<sup>100</sup> This is indeed what *Fun Home* accomplishes through “Ring of Keys:” one person’s story is shared in such a way that audience mem-



bers are invited to reflect not only on the story, but on their own similar personal moments.

Like McClure's analysis on Burkean identification and the narrative paradigm,<sup>101</sup> this analysis also suggests another use for Burkean identification; rather than being used for persuasion, as Burke originally envisioned it, Burkean identification can be adapted to serve an invitational rhetorical function. When not used to persuade audiences, Burkean identification can be used to connect rhetors and audiences, who may find transformation through this invitational rhetoric approach.

It is important to note that the concepts of identification and invitation are quite different, with identification serving to form a connection through consubstantiality and invitation serving to create openness and understanding. The two concepts can and often do work independently of one another. One may identify with another without necessarily being invited to seek consubstantiality; for example, one person may find connection with another simply because they share similar traits, such as being of the same political affiliation or from the same geographic region. Similarly, one may invite another to experience his/her/zir perspective without necessarily seeking consubstantiality with his/her/zir audience. For example, this may occur when a member of a subordinate group invites a



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member of a dominant group to listen to his/her/zir experience of oppression. This analysis suggests that, while these two concepts may be different, and certainly may be used for separate purposes, they may also work hand-in-hand to create both consubstantiality and understanding. I hope that this analysis will inspire others to examine how identification and invitation may work together in a variety of contexts.

It should also be noted that one limitation to this study is that it only examined one song in one musical. Future research may study the connection between Burkean identification and invitational rhetoric in other rhetorical texts. Future studies may also examine how either theoretical construct is used in other performative texts, such as songs, plays, musicals, ballets, and operas.

As an example Foss and Griffin's invitational rhetoric, "Ring of Keys" illustrates a commitment to equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Through Burkean identification, the song illustrates how Small Alison finds consubstantiality with the woman with the ring of keys, thus allowing her to have her own moment of self-discovery, and encourages audience members to identify with Small Alison and consequently reflect on their own "ring of keys" moments. By combining Burkean identification and invitational rhetoric, we may find ourselves connecting with others in ways we never imagined, so that we may, like Small Alison, say to someone whom we have never met, "I know you."



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>"Fun Home." *Playbill.com*. 2017. Accessed February 7, 2017. <http://www.playbill.com/production/fun-home-circle-in-the-square-theatre-vault-0000014079>.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Paulson and Patrick Healy, "Tony Awards: *Fun Home* Wins Best Musical and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Wins Best Play," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2015, C1.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Paulson and Patrick Healy, "Tony Awards: *Fun Home* Wins Best Musical and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Wins Best Play," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2015, C1; Carey Purcell, "Fun Home Duo Make History as First All-Female Writing Team to Win a Tony." *Playbill.com*. June 7 2015. Accessed 7 August 2015. <http://www.playbill.com/article/fun-home-duo-make-history-as-first-all-female-writing-team-to-win-the-tony-com-350678>; Robert Simonson, "In Case You Missed It: The Tonys Aftermath: Fun Home's Box Office Soars and Two Shows Post Closing Notices." *Playbill.com*. June 12, 2015. Accessed August 7, 2015. <http://www.playbill.com/article/in-case-you-missed-it-the-tonys-aftermath-fun-homes-box-office-soars-and-two-shows-post-closing-notice-com-351236>.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Viagas, "How to Promote Gay Rights Around the World? The U.N. Turns to Broadway," *Playbill.com*. March 2, 2016. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://www.playbill.com/article/how-to-promote-gay-rights-around-the-world-the-un-turns-to-broadway>.

<sup>5</sup>Viagas, "How to Promote Gay Rights Around the World? The U.N. Turns to Broadway."

<sup>6</sup>"Fun Home." *Playbill.com*. 2017. Accessed February 7, 2017. <http://www.playbill.com/production/fun-home-circle-in-the-square-theatre-vault-0000014079>.

<sup>7</sup>"Tour Dates." *FunHomeBroadway.com*. 2017. Accessed February 7, 2017. [www.FunHomeBroadway.com](http://www.FunHomeBroadway.com).

<sup>8</sup>Dom O'Hanlon, "Rumored West End Shows We Want to See in 2017." *LondonTheatre.co.uk*. December 20, 2016. Accessed February 7, 2017. <https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/theatre-news/west-end-features/rumoured-west-end-shows-we-want-to-see-in-2017>.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Paulson and Patrick Healy, "Tony Awards: *Fun Home* Wins Best Musical and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Wins Best Play," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2015, C1.

<sup>10</sup>Paulson and Healy, "Tony Awards: *Fun Home* Wins Best Musical and *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Wins Best Play."

<sup>11</sup>Gordon Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'" *Variety*. June 2, 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://variety.com/2015/legit/news/fun-home-tony-awards-nominations-2015-1201510353/>.

<sup>12</sup>Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'"

<sup>13</sup>Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'"

<sup>14</sup>Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'"

<sup>15</sup>Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'"

<sup>16</sup>Cox, "Road to the Tonys: How the *Fun Home* Creators Unlocked 'Ring of Keys.'"

<sup>17</sup>See, for example, Rukhsana Ahmed, "Interface of Political Opportunism and Islamic Extremism in Bangladesh: Rhetorical Identification in Government Response," *Communication Studies* 60 (2009): 82-96; Mary E. Stuckey and Frederick J. Antczak, "The Battle of Issues and Images: Establishing Interpretive Dominance," *Communication*



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<sup>18</sup>See, for example, Gerald Driskill and Jonathan W. Camp, "Identification Strategies for Unity: A Study of a Unity Movement among Christian Church Organizations," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 29 (2006): 445-483.

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<sup>20</sup>See, for example, George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 143-158; Valerie Lynn Schrader, "Union Kids: Using Burkean Identification to Attract Children to the Labor Movement through the AFL-CIO Website," *Pennsylvania Communication Association Annual* 64 (2008): 76-89; John S. Seiter, "When Identification is Too Much of a Good Thing: An Examination of Kenneth Burke's Concept in Organizational, Intercultural, and Group Communication Contexts," *Journal of Northwest Communication Association* 26 (1998): 39-46.

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, William DeGenaro, "'The New Deal:' Burkean Identification and Working-Class Poetics," *Rhetoric Review* 26 (2007): 385-404.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, Valerie Lynn Schrader, "Connecting to and Persuading Audiences through Musical Theatre: Burkean Identification in *Pins and Needles*," *Pennsylvania Communication Annual* 68 (2012): 70-83.

<sup>23</sup>Arthur Y. Smith, "Kenneth Burke's Concept of Identification in the Perception and Evocation of Literature," *Sign of the Bull* 7 (1977): 69.

<sup>24</sup>Kenneth Burke. *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20.

<sup>25</sup>Burke. *A Rhetoric of Motives*: 21.

<sup>26</sup>Burke. *A Rhetoric of Motives*.

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<sup>28</sup>Dennis Day, "Kenneth Burke and Identification – A Reply." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 47 (1961): 416.

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- <sup>51</sup>Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric": 3.
- <sup>52</sup>Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric": 4.
- <sup>53</sup>Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," 4.
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- <sup>56</sup>Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric": 6.
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- <sup>58</sup>Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric": 7.
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<sup>62</sup>Foss, Griffin, and Foss, "Transforming Rhetoric through Feminist Reconstruction: A Response to the Gender Diversity Perspective": 123.

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<sup>90</sup>Tesori and Kron. *Fun Home*: 12.

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