The struggle against injustice is a theme that speaks to people. Compare and contrast the ways in which the authors of literary works depict unjust worlds.

Ariel Dorfman and Alison Bechdel are writers who both tackle the theme of injustice through literature. Both Dorfman's Death and the Maiden and Bechdel's Fun Home depict unjust worlds: Dorfman's play is set in a country transitioning from dictatorship to democracy and Bechdel's graphic novel depicts Alison's childhood in 1980s America, a heteronormative society that expects people to express mainstream sexual identities, something Alison's father forced upon her when she was young. However, the methods the writers use to depict these unjust worlds are different: as a graphic novelist Alison uses illustration, body language and framing to depict the unjust world of her childhood whereas, being a playwright, Dorfman uses stagecraft such as lighting and sound to depict the lingering injustice of the recent dictatorship on Paulina Salas, who struggles in the aftermath of her imprisonment and torture by the previous dictator's thugs.

Both writers depict characters who suffered historical injustices to show how the legacy of injustice continues long after the events took place. In Death and the Maiden, Paulina Salas was forcibly imprisoned, tortured, and raped under a dictatorship that used violent tactics to repress political opposition. In Paulina's case, her imprisonment happened seventeen years ago, yet the events continue to haunt her. She tells Roberto, a doctor she suspects of being complicit in the crimes against her, that she *"still hears his voice everyday"*. More, she can still feel the texture of his skin and smell the garlic on the breath of her kidnappers. Through Paulina's words, Dorfman explores how injustice collapses time, trapping victims in a past world from which they cannot escape: Paulina's experiences have invaded her sense perceptions until she cannot help but experience the present through the prism of the past. In this way, Dorfman explores how injustice works its way into a person's body where it remains lodged. This explains Paulina's extreme actions in the play: kidnapping, tying up, and interrogating Roberto is her way of trying to exorcise the ghosts of the past and expel injustice from her body. Similarly, Alison Bechdel shows how historical injustice lingers, in this case using herself as the example. Alison tells readers of her overbearing father who forced her to perform a heteronormative childhood. While not as explicit as Paulina's experiences, in a way, Alison was 'tortured' as a child by her father who, due to his own struggles with sexuality, forced his beliefs onto his daughter. He would dress her in overtly feminine clothes and style her hair in pigtails with ribbons, despite Alison's preference for boy's clothes and short hair. In the early chapters of her novel, she depicts her father as a 'looming' presence, often using low angles to draw him from a child's point of view, or drawing him as a dark silhouette against a light background.

When dressing Alison in a barrette, he places his hand on her head, and Alison uses close-up framing to create a strong impression of her father's control. These choices depict him as a malevolent, controlling, and sinister figure who perpetrated injustice on Alison as a child. In a way, Fun Home is Alison's way of implying the way this trauma has lingered: like Paulina, she needs to expel this trauma from herself, so uses the process of drawing and writing to process what happened to her. While this is not as extreme as Paulina's reactions, nevertheless, creating a graphic novel requires considerable time and work, immersing oneself in unpleasant memories and collapsing the time between the past and present. Therefore, both works depict characters who were victims of past injustice struggling to overcome this in their own ways.

Furthermore, both Dorfman and Bechdel reveal injustice through the seclusion of their characters. Dorfman opens Death and the Maiden with an extended stage direction describing Paulina's secluded beach house where she is staying with her husband Gerardo. Stage directions indicate how the sound of passing cars disturb the serenity of the house. Additionally, as cars pass, headlights shine through the windows, strafing the scene like searchlights. As the play opens, Paulina hides behind the curtains, visibly nervous and agitated. Dorfman uses the stagecraft of light and sound to imply an unjust world where, the country having only recently transitioned to democracy, characters still live in fear of reprisals by agents of the former dictator. The combination of light and sound creates a tense, fragile atmosphere on stage, not only reflecting Paulina's fragile state of mind, but suggesting that the country is not as safe and secure as the audience might think. Similarly, Alison Bechdel depicts her seclusion as a child in which she was struggling to understand her own sexuality. She thinks back to the Gothic revival mansion in which her family lived when she was young, depicting the house as a labyrinth of twisting corridors, ornate passages, and secretive rooms, such as her father's library at the center of the maze. Through allusions to Greek mythology, she conveys her upbringing as 'monstrous', even going so far as to compare her father to the minotaur lurking in the depths of the labyrinth. As a graphic novelist, Bechdel's methods are different to Dorfman's. Where his stage directions present Paulina's seclusion, she uses graphic art to draw the library and her father's desk as a forbidden place for young Alison using slanted and low angles, conveying the disturbing atmosphere of her father's space. When drawing herself or her siblings, Alison depicts the children as very small, suggesting how powerless they all were under her father's control. Alison is often confined inside rooms or in the car, such as in a petrol station scene where Alison is separated from a more inclusive world (she sees a butch woman with short hair) by being kept inside the car. Therefore, while the works use different methods to present seclusion, both authors do show how seclusion is part of an unjust world.

However, while Dorfman depicts a world in which injustice is impossible to overcome, Bechdel shows how individuals can come to terms with and rise above historical injustice. At the end of the play, Dorfman once again uses dramatic devices, such as off-stage action and lighting, to craft an ambiguous ending that denies the possibility of injustice being fully redressed. Once she extracts a confession from Roberto, it is strongly implied that Paulina murders her once-torturer. Sending Gerardo on an errand, she takes Roberto outside with a gun. However, as the killing happens off-stage the audience cannot be certain that Paulina goes through with the murder. She had previously promised to release Roberto, and the audience has to accept that this is still a possibility. In the play's final scene, set months later in a theater, Paulina sees Roberto in the audience. However, Dorfman's stage direction indicates that Roberto is bathed in a *"phantasmagoric light"*. As the connotations of this word are ghostly, the implication seems to be that Roberto is dead and, like Banquo's ghost returned to haunt Macbeth, now symbolizes Paulina's guilt at taking on the methods of the dictatorship to overcome her personal traumas. Yet, in another twist, Paulina's husband speaks to Roberto, so we still cannot be certain of whether he is dead or alive. This ambiguity is fully intentional: through the combination of off-stage action, lighting, and dialogue Dorfman conveys to the audience Paulina's failure to overcome historical injustice through violent means.

By contrast, Bechdel uses illustrative methods to suggest that, although the process may be difficult, it is possible to struggle successfully against and rise above historical injustice. Bechdel depicts scenes of comparative tenderness between herself and her father. On the first page of her story, she draws young Alison playing with her father as he balances her airplane style on his upraised legs. Her arms are wide and her facial expression happy, depicting an alternative to the forbidding and sinister images of her father that we are later presented. The size of this panel, splashed across the whole page, suggests that this is a powerful and important moment. Despite what the reader later learns about their relationship, this image lingers in the memory implying that Bechdel wants to temper criticism of her father in her work. Furthermore, unlike Dorfman who depicted only antagonism between Paulina and Roberto, Bechdel depicts an important moment of rapprochement between her and her father. Towards the end, she draws an extended scene of them sitting side-by-side as he confesses the truth of what he's done. Bechdel uses repetition and graphic matching to draw the same panel over and over, with only subtle changes in facial expression as her father speaks. His voluntary admission of the truth, even partial, is one of the only times in the story that her father exposes himself and shows vulnerability. It allows the reader to see that truth is a vital starting point for reconciliation. While confession is a point of comparison between both works, the difference here is that Alison's father's confession was voluntary while Roberto's was

forced. Because of this difference, the audience cannot trust that what we are hearing really is the truth or is just Roberto saving himself by saying what Paulina wants to hear. Therefore, the works use contrasting approaches to explore the struggle against injustice, yet point towards the same understanding of truth being a necessary first step in coming to terms with and moving on from injustice when living in unjust worlds.

In conclusion, the struggle against injustice takes many forms in literary works, from the need to recover after wrongful imprisonment and torture, to the desire to escape the malign influence of an overbearing father. Furthermore, different writers like Dorfman and Bechdel use different literary genres (drama and graphic memoir) to explore this theme. Yet the roots of coming to terms with the injustices of the world are similar in each story: both writers encourage facing injustice honestly, beginning with simply speaking out, writing, or drawing the truth, as the first step in the road to reconciliation and recovery.