

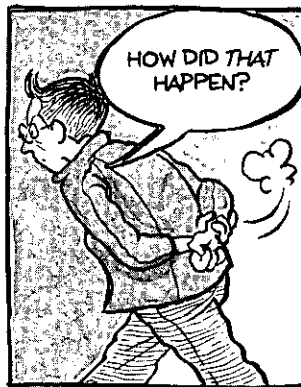
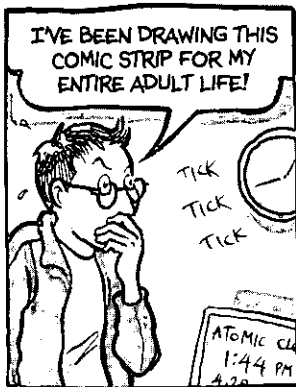
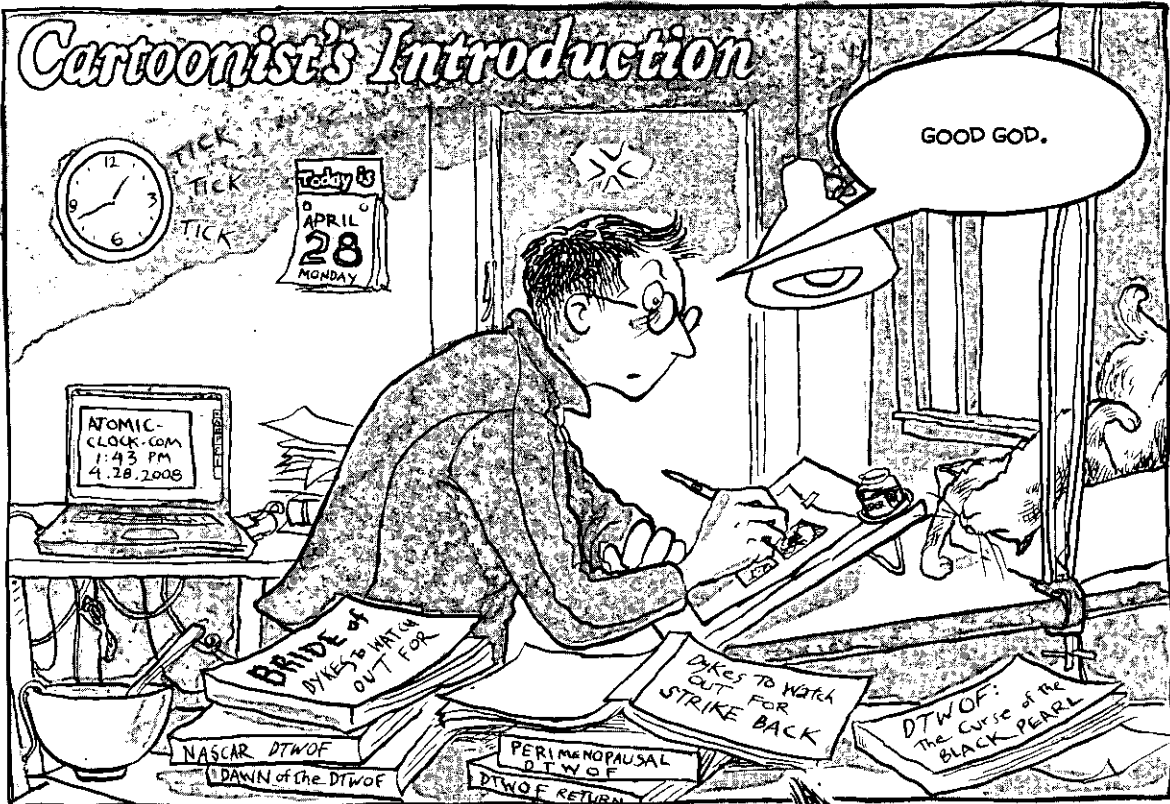
THE
ESSENTIAL
DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR

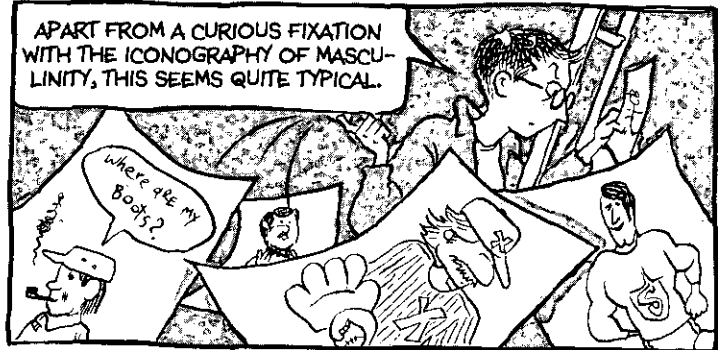
ALISON BECHDEL



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT
BOSTON NEW YORK 2008

Cartoonist's Introduction



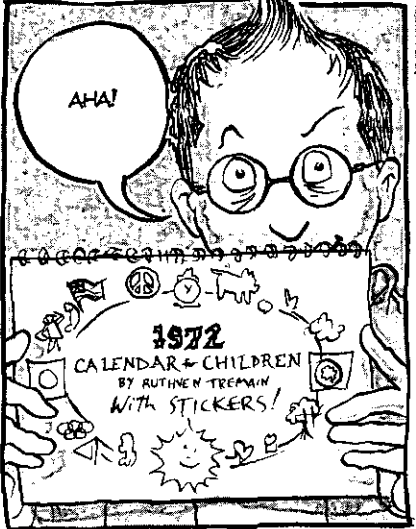


performs well where speaking is unnecessary
Art Draws in detail in realistic way

Personal Habits and Attitudes

1. Follows directions	•••••
2. Independent work	•••••
3. Completion of assigned tasks	•••••
4. Exercise of care in written work	•••••
5. Use of undirected time	•••••
6. Respect for leadership	•••••
7. Use of constructive criticism	•••••
8. Use of sound judgment	•••••

Teacher *Betha L. Boatman* Date *5/26/66*



IN FACT, I DID EXHIBIT AN EARLY DESIRE TO BE A CARTOONIST.

OUTLINE OF MY LEFT THUMB

PAST: Was born 9/10/60 in Haven, PA. My father is a teacher and my mother is a sub-teacher. People say I was a precocious baby. I could walk at _____ months old and my first words (that anyone could understand) were "_____".

THIS 1972 CALENDAR IS THE PRIVATE AND PERSONAL PROPERTY OF _____

PRESENT: In 1972 I am in the 6th grade at school and my best subject is creative writing. The hardest one for me is Math. My favorite sport is skiing and my two closest friends are Becky F. and Jon: B. At home I have 0 sisters and 2 brothers. The way I like to spend my time is Reading, Playing The piano.

FUTURE: In 1992 I expect to be a cartoonist earning \$ _____ a year. I'd like to be _____ with _____ children, cats and dogs, living in _____.

MY FACE OR A REASONABLE FACSIMILE

ALSO SOME SLIGHT GENDER BLURRING...

...A FORTUITOUS LACK OF INTEREST IN THE BIG BUCKS...

...AND AN INSTINCTIVE RESISTANCE TO HETERONORMATIVE VALUES AND THE FILLING OUT OF FORMS.

BUT SOON ENOUGH, STRONGER HEADS PREVAILED.

FLASHBACK: 1977

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: COAST GUARD, NAVY, AIR FORCE, MARINES, NAZI GUARD, ROYAL FUSHERY

GUIDANCE OFFICE

ALISON? COME ON IN.

JOIN THE ARMY: TRAVEL, MEET PEOPLE, KILL THEM

DOROTHY HAMILL WEDGE

FLASHBACK SOUNDTRACK: THAT DISCO MIX OF THE STAR WARS THEME.

DENTISTRY WOULD BE A GOOD FIELD FOR YOU. YOU HAVE THE GRADES.

ON A STACK OF BIBLES, THAT WAS HER REAL NAME

La RUE HINCHLIFFE

SO I COMPROMISED MY IDEALS.

DENTIST + Cartoonist ÷ 2 = Dentist

GRAPHIC

SHUNK!

I WENT OFF TO COLLEGE AND PURSUED A PRACTICAL, CAREER-ORIENTED CURRICULUM.

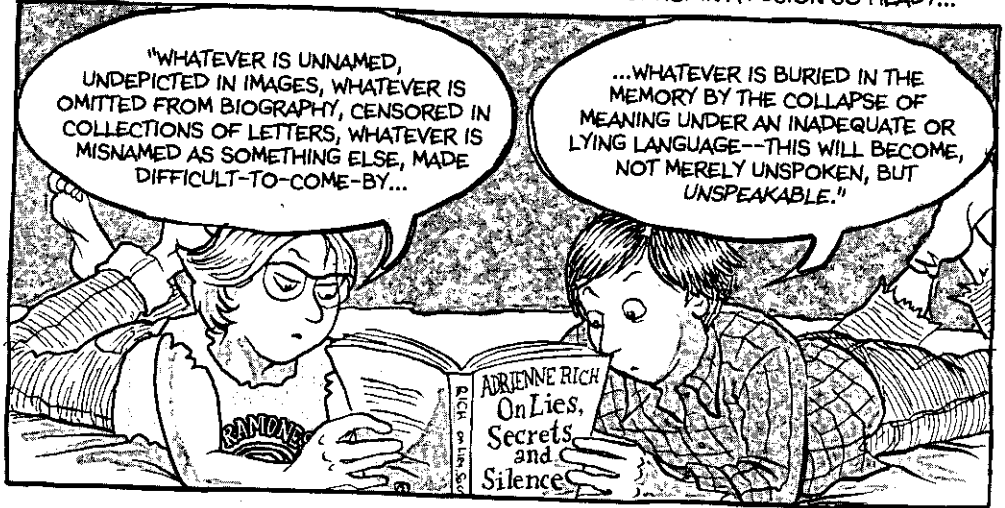
DENTIST + Cartoonist

OBERLIN COLLEGE Internal Trans

Dept	Cat#	Title	Grade
HUM	2	Top Cont Lit: Surrealism	A
GRK		Elementary Greek	B
PHIL		Philosophy of Art	B-
		Deductive Logic	
HUM		Spring Semester	A
EXCO		Private Rdg: Mannerism	C
COMM		Drawing the Figure	
ART	11	Semiotics & the Cinema	
ART	22A	Modern Art	
		_____ in Medicine	

A FIELD OF STUDY THAT ENGAGED BOTH INTELLECT AND INSTINCT IN A FUSION SO HEADY...

UNOFFICIALLY, OF COURSE, I WAS MAJORING IN SOMETHING OF EVEN MORE DUBIOUS MARKETABILITY.



"WHATEVER IS UNNAMED, UNDEPICTED IN IMAGES, WHATEVER IS OMITTED FROM BIOGRAPHY, CENSORED IN COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS, WHATEVER IS MISNAMED AS SOMETHING ELSE, MADE DIFFICULT-TO-COME-BY..."

"...WHATEVER IS BURIED IN THE MEMORY BY THE COLLAPSE OF MEANING UNDER AN INADEQUATE OR LYING LANGUAGE--THIS WILL BECOME, NOT MERELY UNSPOKEN, BUT UNSPEAKABLE."

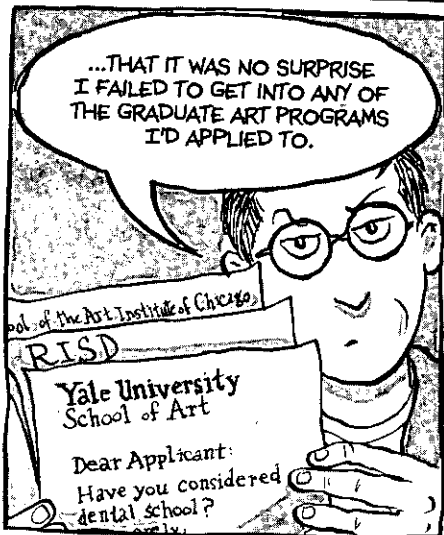
...SO VISCERAL...



WHO A.

INTENSE.

...INDEED, SO ALL-CONSUMING...



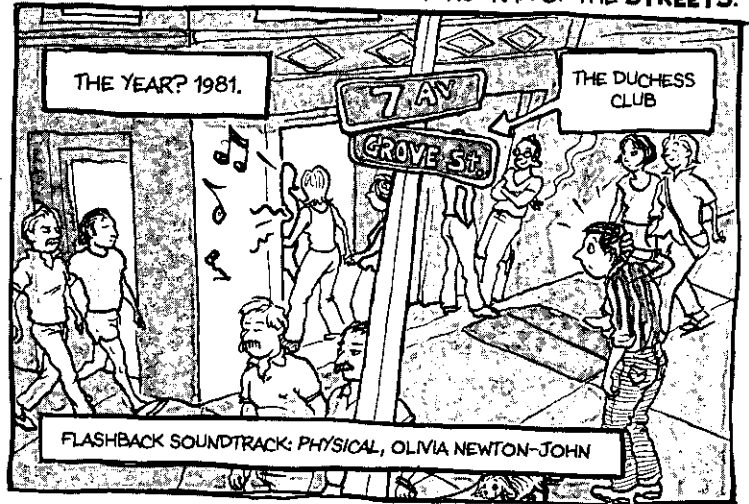
...THAT IT WAS NO SURPRISE I FAILED TO GET INTO ANY OF THE GRADUATE ART PROGRAMS I'D APPLIED TO.

col. of the Art Institute of Chicago
RISD

Yale University
School of Art

Dear Applicant:
Have you considered dental school?

YES, MY FRIENDS. I ATTENDED THE MFA PROGRAM OF THE STREETS.



THE YEAR? 1981.

7 AV
GROVE ST.

THE DUCHESS CLUB

FLASHBACK SOUNDTRACK: PHYSICAL, OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

ARMED WITH NOTHING BUT A HAZY MANDATE TO SPEAK THE UNSPEAKABLE, I LANDED IN NEW YORK CITY.



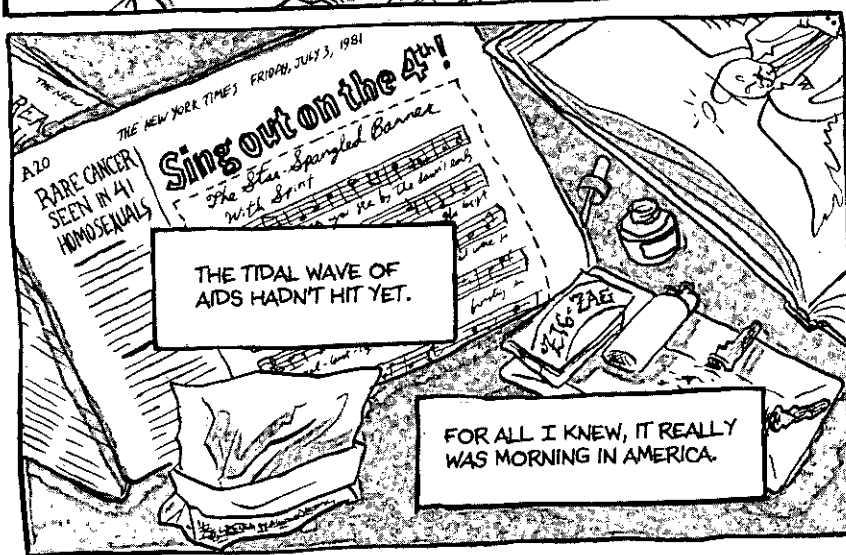
THE UNDERGROUND SCENE OF THE FIFTIES, THE REVOLUTIONARY FERMENT OF THE SIXTIES, THE RADICAL GAY AND LESBIAN COUNTERCULTURE OF THE SEVENTIES...



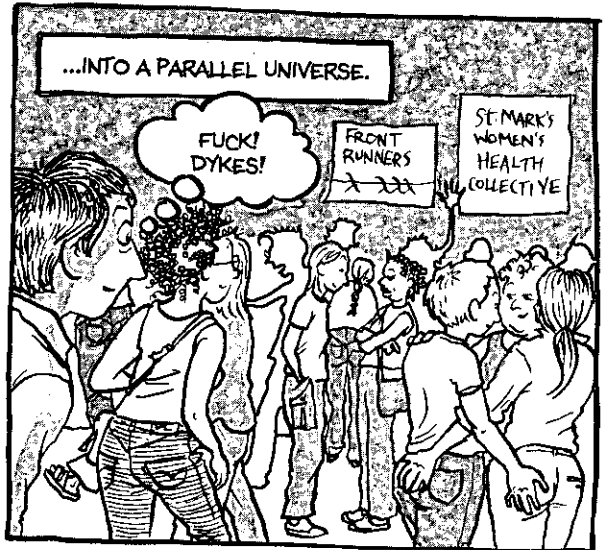
EVERYONE SEEMED TO HAVE THINGS PRETTY MUCH UNDER CONTROL.



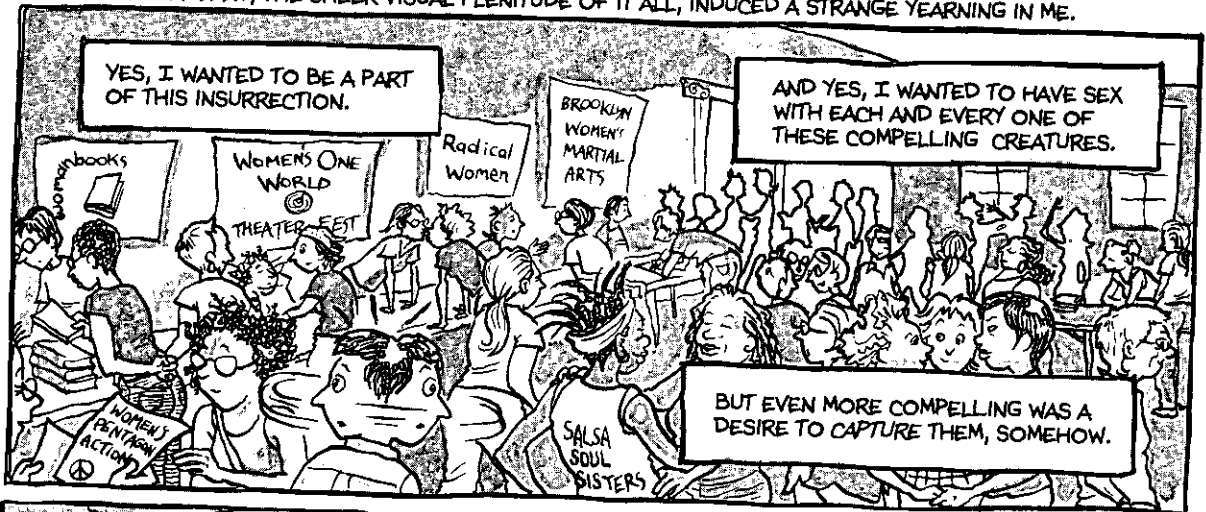
I WAS ADRIFT THAT SUMMER, AIMLESS, LOST, AT SIXES AND SEVENS. IN SHORT, BEWILDERED.



I SAW THAT, IN FACT, THERE WAS PLENTY OF REVOLUTIONARY FERMENT STILL AFOOT.

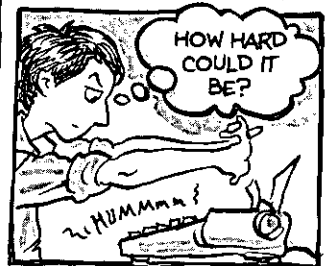


THIS UNRULY PAGEANT, THE SHEER VISUAL PLENTITUDE OF IT ALL, INDUCED A STRANGE YEARNING IN ME.

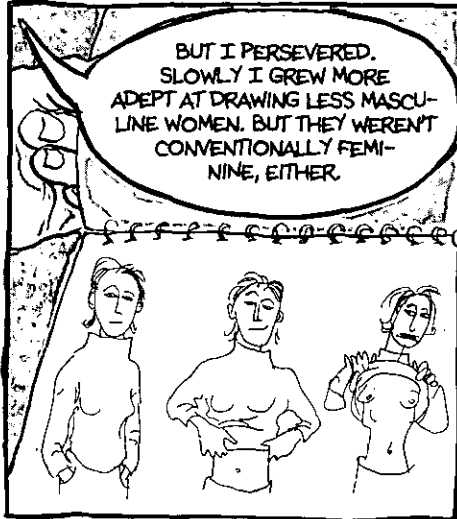
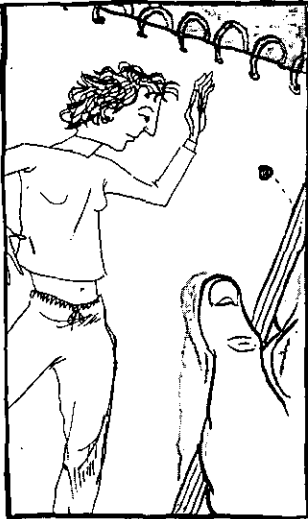
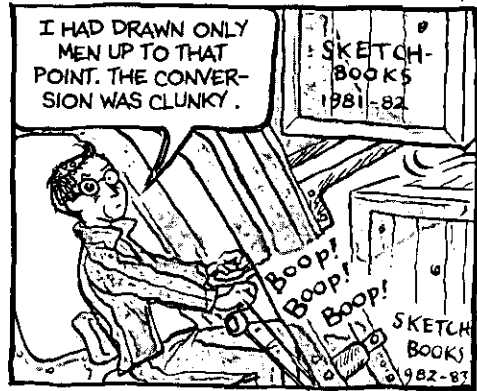
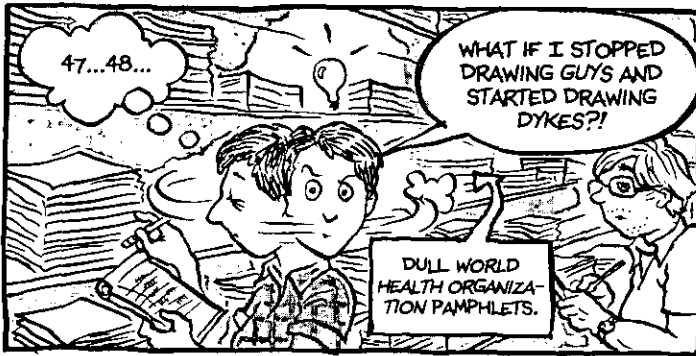


THE WRITERS I WAS DEVOURING SEEMED ABLE TO ACHIEVE THIS, TO APPREHEND THE RICH, TRANSFORMATIONAL QUALITY OF LESBIAN EXPERIENCE AND GET IT DOWN ON THE PAGE.

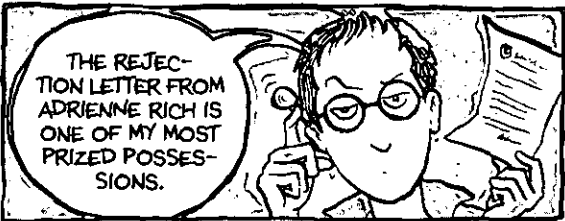
IN MY SPARE TIME, I GAVE WRITING A WHIRL.



MEANWHILE, ONE AFTERNOON AT MY TEMP JOB, I HAD A REVELATION.



AT THE SAME TIME, I CONTINUED MY LITERARY EXERTIONS.



MINISTER WISDOM
 Box 640 - Amherst, Massachusetts 01004

July 23 1982

Dear Alison Bechdel,

We're sorry to be returning this, but we feel that it's the kind of writing that may be important for the writer, but is not sufficiently dense or rich for us to consider publishing it. In a way, it reads as if you and the various girls or women to whom you've been attracted are the only people in the world. And even these people are not followed through -- were you able to



THEY WERE RIGHT. I WASN'T A WRITER OR AN ARTIST.

