

# Profile

## Bechdel (from previous page)

so desperately needy for all those things, if I were a perfectly self-assured person, would I have the motivation to do this comic strip?

**OITM:** What do you think?

**Alison:** I hope that one day I will become a self-assured, secure person, and that yes, I will still do the strip.

**OITM:** What's it like becoming a public person in the lesbian world?

**Alison:** Very strange. That's something that I'm continually adjusting to... There's a way that it's really pleasing to me, to know that people know who I am, maybe not recognize me, but know my work, know my name. And that's extremely gratifying.

I guess it's weird because there's a way that people do know me, whether or not they recognize me personally. I do put a big amount of myself into my strip. I think there's more of a vulnerable feeling—some people know who I am, and I don't know anything about them.

**OITM:** Do you hear from them ever?

**Alison:** Yes. I do. I get really wonderful letters from people. I get some angry letters too, but not nearly as many as I get nice ones.

**OITM:** What do they say to you?

**Alison:** Really sweet things. Like they're just coming out and this book has helped them, or they've been really depressed and reading my book helped them get through some horrible semester at school, or they gave it to their mother to read—really touching stuff.

**OITM:** Do you feel some kind of obligation to the lesbian community that you're recording?

**Alison:** Well, I think there certainly are responsibilities that go along with being able to continue to represent something.

You have to try as hard as you can not to offend anyone.

Lesbians are so much more on the cutting edge of all kinds of awareness about people's oppression, about people's rights, that I think being a lesbian cartoonist is much more risky in terms of offending people than being any other kind of cartoonist. And at times that's been almost paralyzing. Anything I thought of to write would offend someone, somehow. And I think I've just come to accept that my heart is in the right place. I try to be aware. I guess I've come to accept that, yeah, I'm going to fuck up sooner or later. I'm going to offend somebody. I wouldn't do it intentionally, but you have to kind of let go of the fear to get anything done.

**OITM:** I was just thinking about what you're saying now and what you were saying about being an archivist for the lesbian community, and recording what we are and how we think and what we do. Do you feel some kind of responsibility to do that?

**Alison:** Well, I'm listening to myself talk and I'm listening to your question, and I'm realizing that I'm a very selective, even propagandistic kind of archivist. I don't deal with a lot of real touchy subjects and conflicts. I don't talk about S/M; I don't talk about racism in the lesbian community. I kind of steer away from those things. There's a way that my characters live in a little utopia that I'd like... well, I don't even know if I'd like to live in it myself because I think it's kind of sterile. I'm thinking of other lesbian cartoonists I know who get much more down and dirty and really dredge stuff up. And there's a way that I'm kind of a good girl. But that's OK, I mean, that's my nature. I can't do anything else.

**OITM:** Your characters are all into

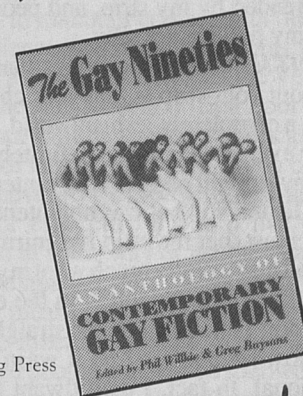
progressive politics, and they all seem to feel the same. They have the same set of political opinions.

**Alison:** Yeah. With maybe slight variations, but basically, they all have the same general politics.

**OITM:** And I'm assuming that those are pretty much your politics.

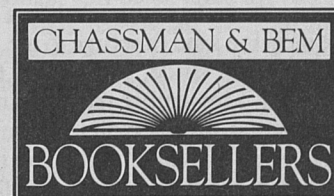
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