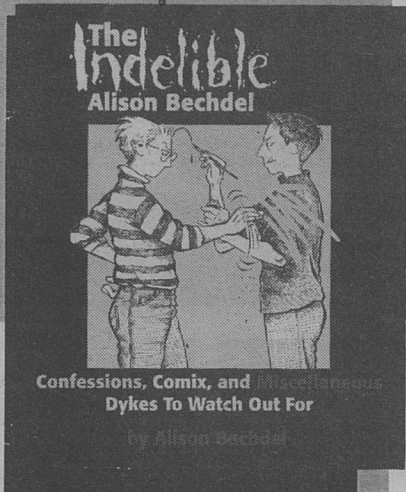


# The Indelible Alison Bechdel



REVIEWED BY BARBARA DOZETOS

## books

I just spent three days on a mental vacation. Yes, that's what it was — a getaway for my brain. In every moment I could wrest from the grips of the 'shoulds' in my life, I've been totally absorbed by *The Indelible* Alison Bechdel.

Author/subject Bechdel calls the book as a retrospective and it is that. Readers expecting *Dykes to Watch Out For* 101, will not be disappointed. She answers all the basic questions. Where did the name come from? Are the characters based on real people? Where do you get your ideas? Why didn't Toni and Clarice have a baby girl?

She also provides an intricate timeline of the characters' lives with entries marking major world events. For instance, we can now see at a glance that Mo began shopping for a therapist just after the Exxon Valdez oil spill. A coincidence? I think not.

The close look at the comic strip alone would have been enough to get most people to pick up a book. However, as the title indicates, the subject is Alison Bechdel; DTWOF is only a part of her story.

It stops short of being an autobiography. There is no "I was born a middle class Catholic straight child" chapter, but we do learn of her childhood, enlightenment, and coming out — all illustrated. "Isn't cartooning an innate human behavior like eating, or whining? Doesn't everyone start drawing funny pictures as soon as they can clench a crayon?" she says in answer to another commonly asked question.

Bechdel illustrates her introspection with drawings she has produced over the years. She refers to them as characters from a kind of central casting and notes a metamorphosis in one of them just before she realized she was a lesbian. "The businessman . . . grew playful, exuberant, and eventually air

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## 'Elfkins' Helps Customers Find Themselves



BY MICHAEL C. ALBERO

Christmas. For many the word conjures images of warm, crackling fires, reindeer, elves, a hearty glass of hot apple cider, eggnog, and mad dashes to the mall for last minute presents when a long lost aunt or uncle suddenly reappears.

No matter where one is from or what one believes it is hard not to get caught up in the holiday season and Deborah H. Quick is no exception. Three years ago she began decorating local store windows with images of the holidays. Her creations became so popular that fevered customers soon requested the items displayed in the store windows even though they were not for sale. The demand grew so great that Quick decided to open her own store in Montpelier in which she hoped to share her enthusiasm for the season with an array of seasonal crafts and decorations available throughout the year.

With a grand party in February 1997, she christened her store, but soon grew very distraught when sales fell to non-existent levels. The numerous customers who had requested her display items during the frantic Christmas season had magically disappeared, and Quick was left to wonder. However, inspiration soon struck when several teenagers wandered into her store seeking costumes and other items in order to transform their identity. With this, Quick's store, Elfkins, metamorphosed into a costume shop that is

now fully prepared to serve the interests of wondering teenagers, crossdressers, the transgendered and anyone else in search of creative fun.

While the idea for a costume and theatre shop was not at the forefront of Quick's mind when she first established her store, it seemed a logical direction to move after learning the identity of a close friend and reading several issues of *Tapestry* magazine. According to Quick, "Once I started reading issues of *Tapestry*, I realized that they [transgendered and transsexual persons] are living in fear... and it's just not right. I don't think of them as any different [from any other people]." This view was furthered when a close family friend decided to change his identity and become a female. Initially it was difficult to adjust to the shock, but over time it became second nature to refer to "him" as a "her." "I love people and I think the diversity of creation is wonderful. I don't care if you're pink, yellow or green. I have friends with feet in each category. I don't think a person's sexual preference is that important. I care more about what a person is inside," says Quick.

Though many are quite satisfied with their "inner self," it is a desire to transform their outer appearance for which a sojourn to Elfkins may be necessary. In addition to a wide array of costumes, wigs, hats and other accessories, the store carries a full line of make-up from Ben Nye, Mehron, Kryolan, Stein and Bob Kelly. "I can get body paints, beard cover... anything

anyone wants, I can do. I even have books for different looks," notes Quick. For those who are not adept at applying make-up, lessons and facials are available by appointment. "In general, people try and soak transgendered people for a lot more money than what something actually costs, and I don't think that is right. I wouldn't be doing that to anyone. I do people up for an event, offer advice, teach them how to apply make-up, and help them pick out basic outfits available and wigs. Women have no problem dressing as men. They have been doing it for years. I just don't want men to feel sheepish about dressing as a woman."

Despite this optimistic outlook, men may still feel awkward about seeking out assistance in a local business. Nevertheless, Quick believes her shop "...offers people a chance to come in somewhere where nobody is going to raise an eyebrow. There is privacy and nobody will come into the shop and make fun of them). That doesn't happen here. For added security and privacy, I'm willing to do things after hours in my home or in the shop by appointment."

Having recently celebrated its one year anniversary, Elfkins' greatest achievement to date is just continuing to exist. Like many people in the community, the store has struggled to find an identity since its inception. However, the new direction is a comfortable fit for the owner, and the store strives to have something to fit each customer, too!

# CALENDAR

**4 MONDAY**  
(continued from 11)  
corporate world, Eve is on top. She is adept at manipulating the male power system and the male gaze for her own advancement within the system. But, being tied in, she's also in bondage. As the pressure mounts over her appointment, something snaps inside, and Eve is catapulted into the wilds of her unruly psyche.

**7 THURSDAY**  
*Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* 7:30 p.m. \$39, \$29, \$16.

**8 FRIDAY**  
Through 10. Women's Springtime by the Sea Package in Ogunquit. Includes a Chris Williamson/Tret Fure concert. A Clay Hill Farm event. FMI 207-646-6661.

**9 SATURDAY**  
Janice Perry, aka Gal OUT FROM UNDERGROUND, City Hall 8 PM. Burlington, VT. Gal brings her one-woman kabarett back to Burlington with a 15 year retrospective show.

Women of the Woods Tenth Anniversary Celebration Dance. 7:30 p.m. Montpelier Unitarian Church. \$5 per person. Mixed music.

**10 SUNDAY**  
Mother's Day with Mother Earth with the Radical Faeries at the Kopstein Spa in Huntington. Call 434 5653 FMI. Circle, Eat, sauna, dig out the pond or something. Starts around oneish.

Full Moon and Beltain ritual, potluck, and Burlington UU Circle meeting. All who support the Covenant of UU Pagans' mission are welcome. Wear garb if you like, and bring something for feast, a musical instru-

ment, and a cushion to sit on. HC accessible. 6 p.m. First UU Society of Burlington, 152 Pearl St. FMI Dian 658-9689.

Seventh Annual Covered Bridges Half Marathon foot race in Quechee and Woodstock, Vermont. This popular running event draws 2,000 entrants and features 4 Vermont covered bridges, a pastoral route along the Ottauquechee River, musical bands en route, lots of great food and excellent organization. The race is sanctioned and certified by the USA Track & Field (USATF) for 13.11 miles. For more information, visit our Web Site at [www.coolrunning.com/coveredbridges](http://www.coolrunning.com/coveredbridges). We can be reached by mail at P.O. Box, 722 Woodstock, VT 05091, by phone at 802-457-1228 or E-mail at [chioffi@valley.net](mailto:chioffi@valley.net).

**11 MONDAY**  
GLITTER Gay And Lesbian Literature Discussion Book Night. Rubyfruit Jungle By Rita Mae Brown. See May 4 listing for details.

**13 WEDNESDAY**  
Rainbow Business Association mixer at Loretta's, 44 Park St., Essex Jct., VT 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. \$10 includes hors d'oeuvres, cash bar.

Battleboro, 7pm Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force organizational meeting. At the home of Mark Herman and Jeff May. FMI 258-9099

**18 MONDAY**  
Dyke Talk, Topic LUST. 7 pm at the Fight Back office on N. Winooski next to the Coop. FMI call Crow 64 5595

Glitter - Johnny Guitar (1954, USA) Director: Ray, Nicholas. Nicholas Ray's thrillingly overwrought anti-Western has been read variously as a parable for McCarthyism, as a "psychological western" of the kind common in the late '40s and early '50s, and as an operatic quasi-lesbian send-up

of the genre, in which women play the roles normally assigned to men. Joan Crawford plays Vienna, a tough former saloon girl who's managed to screw her way to the top — the top here being her own saloon and a tract of land the railroad will pay her a fortune for. Vienna has few friends — a trio of two-bit criminals and a couple of employees — and a lot of enemies, most powerful among them capitalist landowner McIvers and a vicious, sexually frustrated old maid named Emma (Mercedes McCambridge). McIvers and Emma frame Vienna for a murder in an effort to seize her land, but their plans are spoiled by the appearance of an old boyfriend, "Johnny Guitar" (Sterling Hayden), who joins Vienna to improve her odds. All the action stems from the aggressive instincts of Emma, who's all too willing to slip the noose over Vienna's neck when the "menfolk" balk; and from Vienna, who blows Emma away with aplomb.  
See May 4 listing for details.

BLT Health Network will be meeting at the Peace and Justice Center at 7:00 PM. Come visit us, join us, participate in the