

A Memoir in Graphic Form
Translating Hybridity in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

Noa Tims

4240863

BA Thesis English Language and Culture, Utrecht University

First supervisor: Dr Onno Kusters

Second supervisor: A. F. M. Kool MA

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Abstract

The graphic narrative is a hybrid genre, weaving graphic and textual elements to form a new medium. This entails unique translation problems, which this investigation will explore.

Problem which are specific to graphic narrative translation are space restrictions, the necessity of synchrony between word and image, and the intertextuality in the imagery. However, more regular issues, which come into play when translating literary texts as well, will also be explored in the context of graphic narrative translation. Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006) will be used as a case study, as I will illustrate how these translation problems can be solved using her graphic memoir, and I will provide a translation of chapter three of *Fun Home* to further demonstrate the translation of graphic novels and the problems encountered in this process.

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Introduction

This investigation will explore the problems unique to the translation of the graphic narrative, such as the space restriction and intertextuality in the imagery, as well as the more regular issues that come into play when translating literary texts, and how they may be solved in the case of Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006). I will translate chapter three of the graphic novel *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* for this thesis as a case study of the translation of graphic novels and the problems encountered in this process.

The graphic novel, graphic narrative, comic, or picture novel is a genre so complex that a single name for it has not yet been decided on (Freedman 29-30, Groensteen 29). Every single term comes with its own assumptions, stigmas, and research; over the years many critics, scholars and the artists themselves have sought to fit this hybrid art form, which combines words and images, into either literature or graphic art.

Due to the genre's hybridity and tumultuous history in becoming a validated and acknowledged field of study, comics face assumptions and prejudices. Comics were believed to have a bad influence on children and were associated strongly with humour, as if they would be unable to convey seriousness (Frey & Noys 255, Kaindl 268, 272). These assumptions, although waning, still influence the public's mind-set and the attention of critics and academics (Guillaume 93, Kaindl 272). As mentioned, comics were often thought to be short, humorous and printed in newspapers. Graphic novels, on the other hand, are often considered to be conveyors of "ambitions, seriousness and quality" (Freedman 30). The overlap between the graphic novel and comics is present, although they are not completely interchangeable. For the sake of consistency and without aiming to devaluate other terms, this thesis will make use of the term graphic novels as defined by Steven Surdiacourt and Will Eisener: the graphic novel is "a stand-alone (usually autobiographical) narrative in comic strip format, created by a single author who has provided both the text and the graphics, aimed at

an adult audience¹” (Surdiacourt 159). Will Eisner “championed the term ‘graphic novel’, a way of claiming for comics the narrative scope and ambition of literature...” (as quoted by Freedman 30). The term graphic novel will be used since this is the most “open term possible whilst avoiding some of the stigma attached to ‘comics’” (Frey & Noys 256).

A paradoxical relationship exists between the graphic novel’s importance and its reputation. In recent years (greatly due to Art Spiegelman’s critically acclaimed *Maus*) the graphic novel has become more acknowledged as a legitimate art form (Freedman 29, Frey & Noys 256), but despite the attempts to separate it from certain stigmas, it still struggles with prejudice. Thierry Groensteen explores this lack of legitimisation, blaming it in part on the hybridity of the genre which opposes the “ideology of purity” (38) in Western art and combines image and word, two art forms which are complete opposites, as one “shows” and one “names” (Groensteen 38). However, the importance of the graphic novel as a genre is due precisely to its hybridity: “In an increasingly visual culture” the graphic novel is an asset in education, without instilling discouragement of reading in students, and an enrichment of art in general due to its unique multimodal qualities (Borodo 23, Freedman 31, Schwarz 262-3).

Thus, the graphic novel is still on the rise. Ever since the publication of *Maus* in 1986, the genre’s hybridity and multimodality are more and more seen as assets of the genre. The graphic novel is more widely read than ever before, and more works are being translated. As a genre which is so unique and relatively young (as opposed to the European *bande dessinée* and the Japanese *manga* (Freedman 29)), it brings with it a series of interesting, challenging, and unique translation problems which I will discuss in this thesis.

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, translations from non-English sources are mine, NT.

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel is a memoir concerned with Bechdel's coming out as a lesbian as opposed to her father's choice to stay closeted, a situation painted against the backdrop of the United States of the nineteen-eighties, when feminism and a more open mind-set towards queer people were growing. She contemplates the differences between her own situation her father's, his choices and his suspected suicide. She tells this personal story and intertwines it with the bigger picture of acceptance, sexuality, and family.

Throughout her work, Bechdel emphasises the one thing she and her father shared: a love of literature. Bechdel's specific use of intertextuality is one of the issues that makes *Fun Home* such an interesting subject for translation. She seamlessly weaves in references to authors such as Joyce and Camus, but also works on feminism and the lesbian sexuality, showing the reader the importance of both. Moreover, Bechdel recreates entire pages from novels or dictionaries and other, more personal writings such as diary entries, placing published works by famous authors beside her diary entries and her father's letters. She makes the personal and the public work together to create her story.

Although her story is very personal, its importance remains clear. As Ann Cvetkovich explains in her article, "Bechdel explores the story of her father's death out of a desire to understand her history and the genesis of her gender and sexual identity" (113). She continues by explaining that Bechdel's exploration of father's sexuality and her own brings with it a risk of "revealing his questionable sexual behaviour [multiple affairs including one with a minor] casts doubt not only on her own sexuality but also that of gay people more generally" (118). Cvetkovich makes a rather bold statement, but the blurry line between what is acceptable when discussing sexuality is one that is, after all these years, still a relevant and important issue. Bechdel's exploration of sexuality, identity, and acceptance, within or without someone's own family, has universal significance and therefore *Fun Home* is a graphic novel

that should be made accessible to non-English readers and speakers: hence this current exploration and translation.

1. Theory: Translation-relevant text analysis

1.1 Communicative situation

Christiane Nord's method of textual analysis is useful when studying the target text in "its communicative situation" (146) even before the source text is studied. This analysis of the target text follows the guidelines provided by Nord. As mentioned in the introduction, *Fun Home* is a modern staple of queer literature and of western graphic novels (Cvetkovich 111). Both the source and the target audiences are broad, since this is a fictional, literary text. However, most readers might be interested in Bechdel or the graphic novel as a genre, as well as gender and queer issues and literature, since this is integral to the plot. Non-verbal elements are key in this translation, as the images can both limit and inspire the translator. A more extensive exploration of these visual elements and their effects will follow. I aim to retain Bechdel's style and register throughout her narrative, the dialogue and thought in the speech and thought bubbles. It is essential that the translation of the textual elements corresponds with the non-verbal elements whilst staying true to the author's voice.

As mentioned, it is relevant to keep in mind the far-reaching influence the work has when translating it. Due to the techniques applied in the textual elements of her work and how they combine with the visual elements, Bechdel sketches out a large and crucial part of her personal life whilst placing it within the grander scheme of things to make it relevant to a larger number of people (Cvetkovich 122).

1.2 From communicative situation to text

Nord identifies four groups of translation problems: pragmatic, culturally specific, language pair specific and text-specific translation problems.

Pragmatic translation problems "stem from the differences between communicative situations in which the source text and the target text are imbedded" (Nord 147). Examples

are the differences in time, place and the audience's knowledge. Here, for example, the knowledge the target audience might have concerning Alison Bechdel's status as a feminist must be considered in comparison to the knowledge of the audience for the original: she may be better-known in her own culture or within her own language group. The times of the publication of the translation, that of the original and that in which the story is set, must also be considered. *Fun Home* is set in the period between Bechdel's childhood and adulthood, taking place mostly during the nineteen-eighties in non-chronological order – she jumps back and forth to different periods of her life in an order that best suits her addressing of several issues. Since it concerns a memoir, a more historicising translation strategy will be used (Holmes 186). This will preserve the authenticity of Bechdel's story as set during the nineteen seventies and eighties. For example, I would refrain from replacing the mentioning of the film *The Great Gatsby* from 1974 (Bechdel 64) with the more recent adaptation of the novel, with which the audience might be more familiar, as this would compromise the authenticity of the plot and undermine the synchrony with the images. Following the same logic, the strategy will also be exoticising, as the memoir is set in the United States, which is relevant to the bigger picture in which Bechdel positions it; the feminist and gay rights movements in the United States are crucial to her personal story, for example (Bechdel 80, Cvetkovich 123).

Culturally specific translation problems emerge due to the differences between the “norms and conventions of the source and target cultures” (147). Nord refers to units of measure, forms of address and genre conventions, but often other cultural elements also fit this category. On page 85 of *Fun Home*, for example, little Alison asks her father for \$3.70. In this case, I would not change this to the corresponding amount in euros, because of the American setting and the different time. Throughout her work, Bechdel nonchalantly mentions such cultural elements, often typical of both the time and location in which her memoir is set. Here, too, I will translate adequately by exoticising and historicising, while

sometimes I might be forced to add some sort of short and precise explanation in an illusionistic fashion.

The third category Nord identifies concerns translation problems specific to the language pair involved in the translation. Most often when discussing the language pair English-Dutch, the gerund and progressive forms are mentioned, as they can be archaic and unusual in Dutch whereas they are regular tools for sentence lengthening in English (Claes 39). Graphic novels have shorter texts in the margins and text bubbles as not to overwhelm the text, and therefore long sentences are not common. Bechdel, however, focuses on narration in her work, as her dialogue is quite sparse, which allows her to retain a poetical, literary style. Another language specific problem especially relevant to graphic novel translators is the phenomenon of amplification: Dutch generally needs more space than English and therefore the Dutch translation will often consist of longer units or of broken up units for the sake of readability. This is a problem with regards to the special limitations graphic novel translators face, more on this problem will follow. I consider Bechdel's style a priority, as well as the clarity of the plot. Therefore, sometimes omission of elements deemed less relevant might be necessary.

Lastly, Nord discusses text-specific translation problems, for example "the translation of word games and puns" (147). Nord's definition of the problem is very broad, and it often overlaps with many of the other categories. Bechdel uses a register in her narrative textual elements which showcases her literary education and interest in language whilst using a colloquial tone in her dialogue in speech bubbles. In her narrative, she remains remarkably matter-of-fact in her tone; she is always analysing rather than judging. Even when she says: "I grew to resent the way my father treated his furniture like children and his children like furniture" (14), she states emotion without it shining through her choice of words. Only in the dialogues her reaction to the events is genuine and unfiltered, if she is indeed as faithful to her

history as she implies. Her drawings are not hyper realistic, making them easy to decipher while they remain convincingly detailed. The narratives suggest a voice over, and thus never interfere. Besides this, Bechdel's text contains word games such as alliterations ("He was an alchemist of appearance, a savant of surface, a Daedalus of decor" (6)) and has a noticeably high register. Although I will attempt to find equivalent tropes to the many Bechdel employs, I might move a trope to a different image or change tropes (Chesterman 160), due to spatial limitations and word order, or to best convey Bechdel's style and meaning.

The most notable text-specific translation problem in this text is intertextuality; Bechdel refers to literary works of many genres and time periods in many ways. They are quoted directly, alluded to in dialogue and narratives, part of the image as an inscription, etc. I will aim to translate in a manner that is exoticising and historicising, as the setting in time and location are crucial: Bechdel uses culture and time to incorporate her personal story in the bigger history of homosexuality and feminism in the United States. A more elaborate discussion of the strategy I will use when dealing with intertextuality follows below; in order to better understand the remaining textually specific translation problems, I will use Klaus Kaindl's elements of comics as a way of studying said problems, since the text at hand is a graphic novel.

1.3 Elements of the graphic narrative

The analysis above considers the fact that the graphic novel is a hybrid genre which contains visual elements that can and will influence the translator's choices and actions. This will be expanded on using Kaindl's study of the elements of the graphic narrative, since visual elements are so prevalent and important. Kaindl has laid the foundation for many studies on translation in his article "Thump, Whizz, Poom!", in which he focuses on the translation of comics rather than graphic narratives in general. Although he describes the history of the

North-American comic, his article is useful for this thesis as he explores several existing approaches to comic translation and establishes a new approach which is relevant to the translation of comics as well as graphic novels.

Kaindl discusses both the linguistic and semiotic approaches to graphic novel translation in his article, as he explains that these approaches only focus on “aspects of language in the narrow sense” and “on the relationship between text and picture and the resulting problems” respectively (264-5). He establishes the need for a systematic account with a sociological foundation which “takes pictorial and typographic elements into consideration” (265), by explaining that the factors to consider when reflecting on graphic novel translation are not merely linguistic and semiotic. They also depend on the social and economic situation in which the translator is situated as well as his or her personal preferences and choices. He then continues to describe a “translation relevant anatomy of comics” (273), which also applies largely to graphic novels as the elements he mentions are present in both subgenres of the graphic narrative. He divides this anatomy into three parts: linguistic, typographic and pictorial elements (273).

1.3.1 Linguistic elements

Kaindl divides linguistic elements of graphic narrative translation into titles, dialogue texts, narrations, inscriptions and onomatopoeia (273). He explains how the titles and subtitles have an expository function, conveying information to the reader needed in order for him or her to understand to some extent what is to follow (273). Therefore, the translator’s priorities when translating titles lie with conveying the necessary information without extensively lengthening the title. An example is the title of Bechdel’s work itself: *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. The title not only clarifies the style and genre the reader can expect, but also references the funeral home which was prevalent in Bechdel’s youth and sarcastically comments on her own

situation whilst growing up in her father's tightly controlled mansion. The challenge for the translator lies in incorporating these layers into the translated title. Another option would be to preserve the English title and leave it untranslated (Grit 192). The latter option most befits my aimed translation strategy, as it exoticises and historicises the title, and all the layers within it are preserved. The element of the word funeral in the title might not be clear from the start, but it will be revealed later in the memoir. This is no different for the English audience.

Dialogue texts in the case of *Fun Home* are placed in speech bubbles. Not only are they subject to the spatial limitations the translator faces (more on which will follow), they also have a “dramatic function” and are to “[reflect] the speech behaviour of the protagonists in close connection with the socio-cultural context shown in the pictures” (Kaindl 273). The dialogue texts convey the individual voice, mood and diction of each character. With a few exceptions, there is no room for longer speeches or discussions as the text bubbles would obscure the visual elements. Bechdel's graphic novel is filled with characters with different dictions, such as her parents' curtness, her own voice changing as she ages, her grandmother with a notable accent, the dialogue taken from other texts or works; the translator needs to feel at ease with all voices and convey them convincingly to an audience of another socio-cultural environment. Hence, the connotations with each type of speech must be noticeable, and the translator must decide whether the American socio-cultural backdrop must be preserved. Since I aim to translate adequately in general, I will preserve this backdrop.

Bechdel's narration throughout the work is far removed from the tone of voice found in her dialogue texts. Her tone is educated, literary and somewhat emotionally removed. She has a love for language and a way with words, which often makes her sentences long, spanning more than one image, and filled with intertextual references and tropes. Her style is eloquent and since Dutch often requires more space than English, a translation problem arises

when trying to convey her style as well as deal with the spatial limitations as mentioned above. Hence the translator must be concise whilst translating style and retaining the “epic function” (Kaindl 273) of the narrations: propelling the narrative onwards. An example is a narration in which Bechdel describes her father and how he identifies himself with characters from Scott Fitzgerald’s novels: “Like Gatsby, my father fuelled his transformation with ‘the colossal vitality of his illusion.’ Unlike Gatsby, he did it on a schoolteacher’s salary” (64). She combines two overt comparisons with a direct quote and a subtler metaphor indicating that her father feverishly and actively kept alive an illusion to keep himself going. All of this must fit into the designated space.

Fun Home contains inscriptions aplenty, since Bechdel recreates memories, pictures and written texts with precision. She paints a picture which makes it easier to perceive her as a reliable narrator and witness and which creates a believable environment for the reader to engage with under a willing suspension of disbelief. Most of these inscriptions come in the form of book titles on drawn covers or inscriptions on or about the environment, but some are more complex: the chapter that is to be translated, for example, contains the recreation of her father’s letters to her mother, two pages from a dictionary, a typewritten poem by her girlfriend and letter from her mother, a personal diary entry, a page from a book containing interviews and close-ups of passports and photos. Although I will translate the citations and recreated pages from referenced books, I will not translate the titles on the books’ covers unless otherwise indicated in the notes, since the titles are either very famous or exist only in English. In this way, the willing suspension of disbelief can be upheld the most; the reader never loses the knowledge of the setting in an English-speaking country and this solution is the most consistent. Besides this, the reader will never be confronted with large blocks of English texts. The faithful recreation of the personal hand lettering and dictionary definitions will be translated as well.

Lastly, Kaindl discusses onomatopoeia. A familiar phenomenon in comics, these “visual reflection[s] in writing of the auditive dimension of events and emotions” (274) are present in *Fun Home* as well. Kaindl explains in his article how it is often difficult or impossible to translate these elements as the “print plates...are sent abroad without text” (270), making it impossible to change them. However, I will translate onomatopoeia to an equivalent Dutch version, which I will do where the onomatopoeia sounds unnatural or is hard to read (aloud) in the target language, because I feel it would benefit the immersion and because I am not using print plates to produce this translation. Kaindl distinguishes three types of onomatopoeia: “interjections, derivations of nouns or verbs and invented words” (273). An example from chapter three of *Fun Home* is the ringing of the phone: “RING!” (67). Here, I would translate as “TRING!”, which is not much longer but it befits the target language better. Onomatopoeia will be translated in a manner which is naturalising, so the target audience will be familiar with the word; this will preserve the willing suspension of disbelief and keep the reader’s attention focused on the story rather than on unfamiliar onomatopoeia.

1.3.2 Typographic and pictorial elements

Kaindl’s second category is typography in a broad sense: it includes different fonts, sizes and modes as well as “graphemes” and “directionality” and “spacing” of letters to convey movement (274). Bechdel uses typography to emphasise certain emotions, in the form of bold print or italics, in her dialogue texts but not often; only at the absolute height of emotion – whilst finding out her father’s secret sexuality and affairs – is it used quite regularly. On top of this, the character’s emotions are often reflected in their handwriting. For example, Alison writes in her diary on page 78 in reaction to a letter from her mother. Her emotions are very clearly visible in the variations of her handwriting. The translator must try to preserve this

very deliberate stressing of certain dialogues if there is enough space; another word may have to be chosen to write in bold or italics to more befit the target language's natural accentuation and diction.

To be able to deal with every single element in the visual aspect of graphic narratives, Kaindl distinguishes two categories which encompass “panels, colour, speedlines, perspective, format, etc.”: “spatial signs” and “action signs”. Spatial signs are those that change with the readers' perspectives and “represent the scene of the action” (274). Action signs remain unchanged, as they are the visual elements which carry the narrative. Although the Bechdel home might seem to be a spatial sign, since it is the background for most of the story, it can be considered an action sign because it functions as an important element of the plot.

1.4 Limitations of space and synchrony

Two translation problems commonly found in the translation of any graphic narrative are those concerned with the space the translator can work with and the necessity of synchrony between the textual and the visual elements of the work (Sztajn as quoted by Guillaume 98, Mayoral, Kelly & Gallardo 356). These problems are also ever-present throughout *Fun Home* and therefore these problems will be further explored using the elements and approaches of Kaindl.

1.4.1 Spatial limitations

The limitations of space the translator faces are strict, as both the dialogue texts and the narrations are in thought or speech bubbles or in blocks between or on the panels (Coumans 12). The translated texts are inserted into the spaces left blank on the page leaving little to no room to manipulate the size of either the empty spaces or the font (Guillaume 97, Kaindl

270). David Bellos explains that the translator “has to make his version fit physically into the bubble-spaces left blank... A very small amount of flexibility is provided by being able to alter the size of hand-drawn lettering – but limits are set by the requirement of legibility” (136). Here, Bellos refers to the fact that many graphic narratives make use of a font which was written by hand by the artist, as is the case in *Fun Home*. Spatial limitations heavily influence the translator’s choices in the field of linguistic elements as defined by Kaindl above. Titles, dialogues, narrations, inscriptions and onomatopoeia simply cannot exceed a certain length and will often force the translator’s hand. I will consider Kaindl’s translation strategies, “*repetitio*, *adiectio*, *detractio*, *transmutatio*, *substitutio* and *deletio*” (275) in order to deal with the spatial limitations.

“*Repetitio*”, taking over the source text and images without any changes whatsoever, is most commonly used in dealing with onomatopoeia and inscriptions (Kaindl 275). I will do this with most inscriptions, excepting onomatopoeia and recreated pages, as discussed above. “*Deletio*” refers to the deletion of text or images (Kaindl 277), and while I will not remove images or censor the original in any way, “*detractio*”, the partial omission of textual elements deemed less relevant may be necessary due to the spatial limitations (Kaindl 277). I will not alter the images. “*Adiectio*” is the addition of elements (Kaindl 278), which I suspect I will not be using. I may need to translate in an illusionary fashion in order to make a foreign cultural element of untranslated terms easier to understand for the target audience, but due to the spatial limitations, I may not always be able to or deem it desirable. “*Transmutatio*”, the changing of order (Kaindl 281), may be used to build sentences structures that are more natural for the target audience (since some sentences span more than one bubble of blank space, certain elements may have to be moved). I can also use this strategy by moving a textual element over to create or fill up space wherever necessary. “*Substitutio*” means the

replacing of an element with an equivalent (Kaindl 283). This does not befit my translation strategy of adequacy, and therefore I suspect I will not use this translation strategy.

1.4.2 Limitations of synchrony

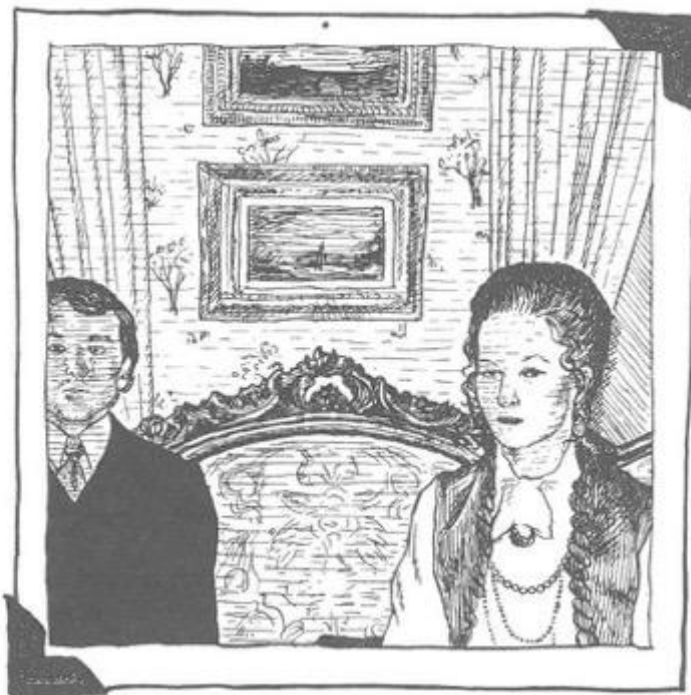
Bellos also explains how the pictorial element influences the translator's options: "The cartoon translator also has very little freedom to move meanings around between frames, since the captions must fit the picture, right down to the details of what the depicted characters are doing with their arms and hands" (136). Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo further explain how the necessity of synchrony between the pictorial and the textual not only complicates the translation process, but also results in a constrained translation, as the translator's hand is often forced by what is depicted (356). In this way, the message from the source text is altered by, added to and influenced by the visual perception of the target audience, limiting interpretation possibilities. In addition, in *Fun Home* the textual often takes the role of the visual and the other way around because of the many inscriptions and recreations making "separation between the different media [less] precise" (Mayoral, Kelly & Gallardo 359). However, the same limitation of interpretation options can also be a source of inspiration for the translator, and help with the process of translation by clearing up possible vagueness of the text (Borrodo 22, Guillaume 100). This pictorial dimension, although it limits options, also limits the number of possible interpretations of the textual elements and lessens the possibility of ambiguity.

Although the above only discusses comics, it also applies to graphic novels since the same pictorial/textual format is used. In the case of *Fun Home* however, a great deal of the narrative can be seen as distanced from the text due to the voice-over style discussed above. Therefore, in some cases, the bonds between text and image are less obvious and strict, influencing both the limitations and benefits of constrained translation. On the other hand, the

dialogue is of course closely linked to both the spatial signs and action signs. I will aim to retain the same level of connection between imagery and text as Bechdel, while making sure the characters' dialogue remains relevant to the image. Where image and text merge and in some cases the drawn text is partly obscured by blocks of narrative (Bechdel 57, 63, 77), interpretation of the unreadable text is needed which I will try to translate in line both with the sections that are readable and the narrative provided.

2. *Fun Home* in translation: chapter three

HOOFDSTUK 3



DIE OUDE CATASTROFE

DE KWESTIE VAN MIJN VADERS DOOD WAS 'QUEER'; EN ALLE BETEKENISSEN VAN DAT WOORD WAREN TREFFEND.

HET WAS VREEMD, AFWIJKEND ALS HET WAS VAN DE NORMALE GANG VAN ZAKEN. HET WAS VERDACHT. MISSCHIEF WAS HET ZELFS ONECHT.

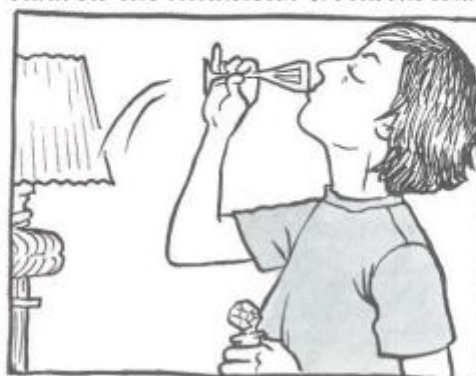
HET VERPESTE EN VERWOESTTE ONS ALLEMAAL OP EEN ANDERE MANIER. MIJN FAMILIE WAS IN SLECHTE STAAT.

tsch /kwatsj/ onzin.
 quattrocento /kwatrosjento/ de vijftiende eeuw
 als tijdperk in de italiaanse kunst.
 queer /kweer/ [bn] 1. Afwijkend van de norm, anders dan gebruikelijk is in gedrag, uiterlijk of gebeurtenis; anders op een bepaalde vreemde manier van wat als normaal beschouwd wordt, vreemd, afwijkend.
 2a. [slang] Namaak, waardeloos, onecht. b. Verdacht, onbetrouwbaar, moeilijkheden zitten; onpasselijk.
 3. Excentriek; zonderling.
 4a. [slang] Dronken, zat, toeter maken.
 2. Verpesten, verwoesten, verknoeien, verspillen, verprutsen; iets of iemand in een slechte staat stellen; zie queer /kweer/ [zn] 1. Algemeen, te positie brengen; zie queeste /kweeste/ [v; -n] onmogelijke opdracht de men zie querulant /kweeruulan klachten en bezwa

HET MAAKTE ME ONPASSELIJK, IK VOELDE ME ZWAKJES EN SOMS ZELFS DRONKEN.



IN DIE TIJD WAS ZIJN DOOD VOOR MIJ ECHTER ONLOSMAKELIJK VERBONDEN MET EEN DEFINITIE DIE OPVALLEND GENOEG ONTBRAK UIT ONS GIANTISCHE WOORDENBOEK.



SLECHTS VIER MAANDEN DAARVOOR HAD IK IETS AAN MIJN OUDERS OPGEBIECHT.



MAAR DIE HYPOTHESE WAS ZO VOLLEDIG, ZO OVERTUIGEND, DAT IK BESLOOT HEM METEEN TE DELEN.

OP DAT MOMENT WAS MIJN HOMOSEKSUALITEIT NOG EEN THEORIE, EEN ONGETOETSTE HYPOTHESE.



HET NIEUWS WERD NIET ZO GOED ONTVANGEN ALS IK HAD GEHOOPT. IK HAD EEN MOEIZAME BRIEFWISSELING MET MAM.



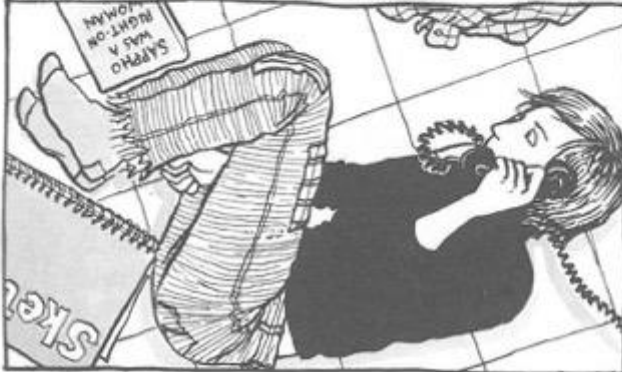
ER VOLOPTE EEN TELEFOONOPSPREK DAT ME VOLLEDIG VAN MIJN STUK BRACHT.



IK WERD OVERSCHADUWD, IK WAS VAN HOOFDROLSPELER IN MIJN DRAMA DE VROLIJKE NOOT IN HUN TRAGEDIE GEWORDEN.



IK HAD VERWACHT DAT IK DOOR UIT DE KAST TE KOMEN ZELFSTANDIGER ZOU WORDEN, MAAR HET ZOOË ME JUUST TERUG IN DE WERELD VAN MIJN OUDERS.



MIJN VAPERS DOOD VOLGE ZO ABRUPT OP MIJN PROEFDEESTIGE DEBUUT DAT IK NIET ANDERS KON DAN AANNEMEN DAT ER SPRAKE WAS VAN EEN OORZAKELIJK VERBAND.

ALS IK MIJN SEKSUELE ONTPEKKINKJE NIET ZO KRAMPACHTIG HAD WILLEN DELEN, WAS DE VRACHTWAGEN VIER MAANDEN LATER MISSCHIE WEL PROBLEEMLOOS GEPASSEERD.



WAAROM HAD IK HET HEN VERTELD? IK HAD NOG NIET EENS SEKS GEHAD. MIJN VADER DAARENTEGEN, HAD JARENLANG SEKS GEHAD MET MANNEN ZONDER HET TE DELEN.



EIGENLIJK KAN ALLEEN EEN LANDHEER EEN KAMER IN ZIJN HUIS EEN "BIBLIOTHEEK" NOEMEN ZONDER AANSTELLERIG TE KLINKEN, MAAR ER WAS ECHT GEEN ANDER WOORD VOOR.



...WAS DAT DAN ZO VERGEZOCHT? MISSCHIEN KAN UITERLIJK VERTOON ZO DIEPGAAND, ZO GELOOFWAARDIG ZIJN IN DE DETAILS, DAT HET GEEN VERTOON MEER IS...



DE BIBLIOTHEEK WAS EEN FANTASIE, MAAR WEL EEN DIE FUNCTIONEERDE.



GASTEN STELDEN ALTIJD DEZELFDE VRAAG ALS ZE DE ENORME WALNOOTHOUTEN KAST ZAGEN.



EEN BELANGRIJK ASPECT VAN PAPS LANDHEERACT WAS HET ONDERRICHTEN VAN HET PLEBS; ZIJN WAT MEER VEELBELOVENDE MIDDELBARESCHOOLLEERLINGEN.

IN SOMMIGE GEVALLEN WAS DIE BELOFTE ONGETWIJFELD VAN SEKSUELE AARD, MAAR WAT ER VERDER OOK AAN DE GANG MOCHT ZIJN, ER WERDEN WEL BOEKEN GELEZEN.



PAP WAS ENTHOUSIAST OVER HEEL VEEL SCHRIJVERS, MAAR ZIJN VOORLIEFDE VOOR FITZGERALD WAS ONGEKEND.



MIJN MOEDER HAD HEM EEN BIOGRAFIE VAN FITZGERALD TOEGESTUURD VOORDAT ZE GETROUWD WAREN, TOEN PAP IN DIENST WAS.

HIJ GING BIJ HET LEGER TOEN HIJ STOPT MET ZIJN OPLEIDING ENGELS, OVERDONDERD DOOR DE HOEVEELHEID WERK DIE VERZET MOEST WORDEN.

IN ZIJN BRIEVEN AAN HAAR SLOPEN STEEDS VAKER VERWIJZEN NAAR DE BIOGRAFIE.



HIJ WAS GEFASCINEERD EN GEKREPEN DOOR DE VERHALEN OVER HET ROEKELOZE EN BESCHONKEN GEDRAAG VAN SCOTT EN ZELDA.

Hoe kwamen die twee er überhaupt op om dat soort dingen te doen? Afval naar de Murphy's gezien tijdens een tuinteetje! Ze lijken zulke snoe, fantastische, onbeduidende genieën. Nee, niet geniaal. Getalenteerd. Hij had een doorzettingsvermogen dat nooit aftiet, zelfs niet toen hij getroffen werd door tragedie. Arme, arme Zelda.

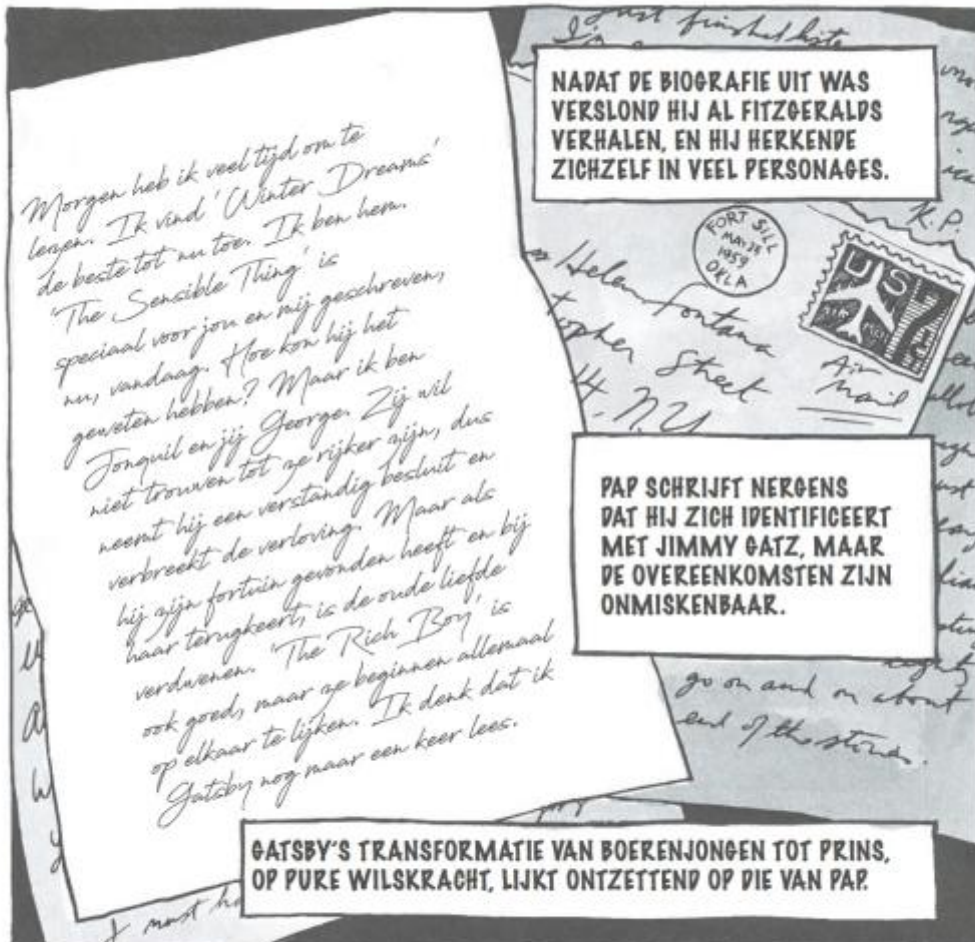


HET MOET MIJN VADER WEL ZIJN
OPGEVALLEN DAT SCOTT ZELF IN DIENST WAS
TOEN HIJ ZIJN EERSTE ROMAN SCHREEF EN
ZELVA HET HOF BEGON TE MAKEN.



IN HET BEGIN WAREN PAPS BRIEVEN AAN MAM
NIET ERO OPENHARTIG, MAAR LANGZAAM AAN
BEGONNEN ZE OVER TE LOPEN MET FITZGERALDIAANS
GEFORMULEERDE SENTIMENTEN.

Weet je wel dat ik van je hou. Het
voelt zo geweldig om dat te zeggen
dat ik het nog een keer doe. Ik hou
van je, ik hou van je, ik hou van je, jij
verschrikkelijk geweldige meid. Ik
weet het al ik moet wat te drinken.
Dit is onze avond om te zitten en
drinken en naar elkaar te kijken.



NET ALS GATSBY VOEDDE MIJN VADER ZIJN TRANSFORMATIE MET DE 'ENORME LEVENDIGHEID VAN ZIJN ILLUSIE'. MAAR HIJ DEED HET VAN EEN DOCENTENSALARIS.



MIJN VADER LEEK ZELFS OP GATSBY, OF IN IEDER GEVAL OP ROBERT REDFORD UIT DE FILM UIT 1974.



MISSCHIEN LIJKT HET ALSOF IK MIJZELF EEN ENORME ILLUSIE VOORHOUD DOOR MIJN VADER MET ROBERT REDFORD TE VERGELIJKEN.

ZELDA FITZGERALD BESCHIKTE OVER EEN VERGELIJKBARE ONGRIJPBARE CHARME, ONMOGELIJK OP CAMERA VAST TE LEGGEN.



IK DENK DAT MIJN VAPER ZO AANGETROKKEN WAS TOT DE VERHALEN VAN FITZGERALD OMDAT ZE ZO ONLOSMAKELIJK VERBONDEN WAREN MET FITZGERALDS LEVEN.



MAAR HET WAS NU EENMAAL MIJN VAPERS SPECIALITEIT OM EEN FANTASIE OP DIE MANIER IN DE REALITEIT TE POSTEREN.



ALS MIJN VADER EEN CREATIE VAN FITZGERALD WAS, DAN WAS MIJN MOEDER DIRECT UIT EEN ROMAN VAN HENRY JAMES GESTAPT; EEN VITALE AMERIKAANSE IDEALISTE, VERLEID DOOR DE PERVERSE ALLURE VAN HET CONTINENT.



HET PERSONAAGE DAT ZE SPEELDE, EEN EENVOUDIGE MAAR VERMOELENDE VROUW, WORDT VERLIEFD OP MORRIS TOWNSEND, EEN GELUKSZOEKER MET EEN GOUDEN TONG.



HET STUK WIJKT AF VAN DE BEKENDE HETEROSEKSUELE CONVENTIES...

...OMDAT CATHERINE HIER DE MINNAAR IS, EN MORRIS DE BEMINDE.



IK VERWIJS NIET ALLEEN NAAR JAMES EN FITZGERALD OM MIJN OUDERS TE BESCHRIJVEN, MAAR OOK OMPAT ZE ZO VEEL ECHTER ZIJN VOOR MIJ IN FICTIEVE BEWOORDINGEN.



EN MISSCHIEN VERKLAART MIJN KOELE ESTHETISCHE AFSTANDELIJKHEID HET ANTARCTISCHE KLIMAAT THUIS WEL BETER DAN LITERAIRE VERGELIJKINGEN OOIIT ZOU DEN KUNNEN.



MIJN OUDERS LEKEN ZICH BIJNA TE SCHAMEN VOOR HUN HUWELJK. ZO HAD DEN ZE NIET EENS EEN ANEKDOTE OVER HOE ZE ELKAAR HAD DEN ONTMOET.





HIJ WEIGERDE ZELFS KOPPIG OM MIJN MOEDER MET HAAR VOORNAAM AAN TE SPREKEN.

IK WAS SLECHTS TWEE KEER GETUIGE VAN EEN LIEFDEVOL GEBAAR. MIJN VADER KUSTE MIJN MOEDER EEN KEER VLUCHTIG VOORDAT HIJ EEN WEEKENDJE WEGGING.



DE TWEEDE KEER LEEDDE MIJN MOEDER HAAR HAND OP ZIJN RUG TERWIJL WE TV KEKEN.

DEZE AFWIJKINGEN VAN HUN DAGELIJKSE EN ONONDERBROKEN VIJANDELIJKHEID...



WAREN BIJNA NET ZO VERONTRUSTEND ALS DE VIJANDELIJKHEID ZELF.



WAT WAS DAT?

HET KLONK ALSOF-IE EEN STAPEL BOEKEN VAN HET BUREAU AF SMEET.

UITEINDELIJK WIST IK VAN MIJN MOEDER LOS TE PEUTEREN DAT ZE ELKAAR HADDEN ONTMOET TIJDENS EEN TONEELUITVOERING.



OM TE BESLUITEN: WIJ ZIJN 'T ZOZEER EENS, DAT WIJ AANSTAANDE ZONDAAG HET HUWELIJK SLUITEN. 5

HET WAS EEN UNIVERSITEITOPVOERING VAN 'THE TAMING OF THE SHREW'. MIJN VADER HAD EEN BIJROLLETJE, MAM DE HOOFDROL. 6



IK LIET JE LIEVER HANGEN OP DIEN ZONDAAG!

HET TONEELSTUK ZELF IS AL DUBIEUS, NATUURLIJK. DE KOPPIEGE KATHERINE WORDT ONDERDRUKT EN GEBROKEN DOOR DE GELDBELUSTE, TIRANNIEKE PETRUCHIO.



DE MAAN IS HET, ZEG IK, DIE HELPER SCHIJNT.

IK WEET, DAT HET DE ZON IS, DIE ZO SCHIJNT.

IK MIJMER VAAK OVER WAT MIJN VADER TOEN AANTREKKELIJKER VOND: DE ROL, DE ACTRICE, OF MIJN MOEDER ZELF.

ZEG WAT HIJ ZEGT, OF WE KOMEN NIET VOORUIT.

ZELFS IN DIE PRE-FEMINISTISCHE PERIODE MOETEN MIJN OUDERS DE RELATIE TUSSEN KATHERINE EN PETRUCHIO PROBLEMATISCH HEBBEN GEVONDEN.



IK DENK DAT ALS ZE HADPEN GEWETEN DAT HUN HUWELIJK ZO OP HET STUK ZOU GAAN LIJKEN, ZE GESCHOKT ZOU DEN ZIJN GEWEEST.



ALS 'THE TAMING OF THE SHREW' EEN VOORBODE WAS VAN HET VERLOOP VAN HET HUWELIJK VAN MIJN OUDERS, LIEP HENRY JAMES' 'PORTRAIT OF A LADY' MIN OF MEER PARALLEL AAN HUN VROEGERE JAREN SAMEN.

HELDIN ISABEL ARCHER LAAT AMERIKA ACHTER ZICH EN VERTREKT NAAR EUROPA, LEVENSLUSTIG EN OPTIMISTISCH OVER HET VINDEN VAN EEN CONVENTIELOOS, MINDER BEKROMPEN LEVEN.

ISABEL WIJST EEN AANTAL GESCHIKTE HUWELIJKSKANDIDATEN AEN MAAR ZE NEEMT DE HAND VAN GILBERT OSMOND, EEN VERFIJNDE EUROPESE KUNSTVERZAMELAAR, LOSBANDIG EN PLATZAK.



KORT NA HUN HUWELIJK GINGEN MIJN OUDERS NAAR PARIJS OM EEN VRIEND VAN PAP UIT ZIJN DIENSTTIJD OP TE ZOEKEN.

MAM ZOU ER LATER ACHTERKOMEN DAT PAP EN ZIJN VRIEND MINNAARS WAREN GEWEEST.



ZE KREGEN ENORME RUIZIE IN DE AUTO.





MAAR ISABEL IS GOEDHARTIGER DAN GOED VOOR HAAR IS EN ZE BLIJFT TOCH BIJ HEM...

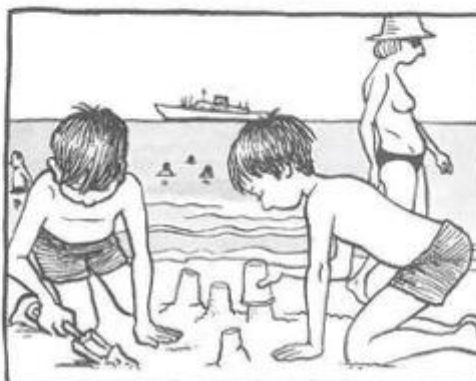


...EN ONDANKS AL HAAR JEUGDIGE OPTIMISME, WORDT HET TEGENDEEL HAAR PART EN WORDT ZE 'VERMALEN IN DE MOLEN VAN CONVENTIE'.



DE REIS WAS OPWINDEND. IN ZWITSERLAND HAALDE IK MIJN OUDERS OVER OM STEVIGE WANDELSCHOENEN VOOR ME TE KOPEN.

IN CANNES PLEITTE IK OVERTUIGEND VOOR HET RECHT OM EEN ZWEMBROEK TE DRAGEN IN PLAATS VAN EEN BADPAK.



IK HAD GEPROEFD VAN DIE GEWELDIGE VRIJHEID VAN CONVENTIE. MAAR IK VERMOED DAT, TERWIJL MIJN HORIZON ZICH VERBREEPDE, MIJN OUDERS DIE VAN HEN VOELDEN VERSMALLEN.



MISSCHIEF DAT HET TOEN WAS DAT IK EEN ONUITGESPROKEN VERPRAEG SLOOT MET MIJN OUDERS: IK ZOU NOOIT TROUWEN, IK ZOU HET KUNSTENAARSBESTAAN BLIJVEN LEIDEN WAARVAN ZIJ ALLEBEI AFSTAND HADPEN GEDAAN.



DAT IS OOK WAT ER ZOU GEBEUREN, ZIJ HET OP EEN ANDERE MANIER DAN VERWACHT.



IK HAD AL GEWETENSBEZWAREN SINDS MIJN DERTIENDE...

...TOEN IK HET WOORD VOOR HET EERST TEGENKWAM, PROMINENT AANWEZIG IN MIJN WOORDENBOEK.



LESBIENNE

lesbienne /lezbjenne/ [v] vrouw met e
keur voor vrouwen
lesbisch [bn] (van vrouwen) homosek
lesbo [v;~'s] lesbienne

MAAR NU WAS ER DAT ANDERE BOEK, VOL MET MENSEN DIE AL HUN GEWETENSBEZWAREN OPZIJ HADDEN GEZET, DAT ME BOOD EEN BREDERE DEFINITIE.



DAT EERSTE EXEMPLAAR MAAKTE DE WEG VRIJ VOOR ANDERE WERKEN.



EEN PAAR DAGEN LATER VERZAMELDE IK WAT MOED EN KOCHT ER ZO EEN.



DAT BOEK VERWEES WEER NAAR ANDERE BOEKEN DIE IK IN DE BIBLIOTHEEK KON VINDEN.



OP EEN DAG BEDACHT IK DAT IK HOMOSEKSUALITEIT ZELFS KON OPZOEKEN IN DE KAARTCATALOGUS.



IK VOND EEN STAPEL VAN EEN METER HOOG IN HET REK, DIE IK RAZENDSNEL VERSLOND.



AL SNEL STRUINDE IK ZELFS DE OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK AF, ONBEACHT DE RISICO'S.





IK GING NAAR EEN BIJeenKOMST VAN EEN GROEP DIE ZICHZELF DE 'GAY UNION' NOEMDE, EN IK OBSERVEERDE DEZE VERSTEEND EN IN STILTE.

MAAR MIJN AANWEZIGHEID STOND VOOR MIJ GELIJK AAN EEN OPENBARE VERKONDIGING. IK WAS IN DE WOLKEN TOEN IK VERTROK.



IK VERKEERDE NOG IN DIE VERRUKTE, GESPANNEN TOESTAND TOEN IK BESLOOT HET AAN MIJN OUDERS TE VERTELLEN. HET LEEK ME NOGAL ONZINNIË HET LANGER VERBORGEN TE HOUDEN.



IK SCHREEF HEN EEN BRIEF: AFSTANDELIJK, MAAR IK HEB AL UITGELEGD DAT WIJ NU EENMAAL ZO'N SOORT FAMILIE WAREN.



MIJN VADER BELDE ME NA ONTVANGST. HIJ LEEK OP EEN VREEMDE MANIER VERHEUFD TE DENKEN DAT IK AAN EEN ORGIE MEEDEED.



MAM WILDE NIET MET ME BELLEN.



HET EPISTEL DAT ZE TERUGSTUURDE KWAM ANDERHALVE WEEK LATER MET DE POST.



IN HET POST SCRIPTUM STOND DAT IK DE BRIEF MOEST Vernietigen.



EEN SYMBOOL VAN ZELFSTANDIGHEID? HOE DAN OOK, HET LEEK ME EEN DING DAT EEN LESBIENNE HOORT te bezitten.



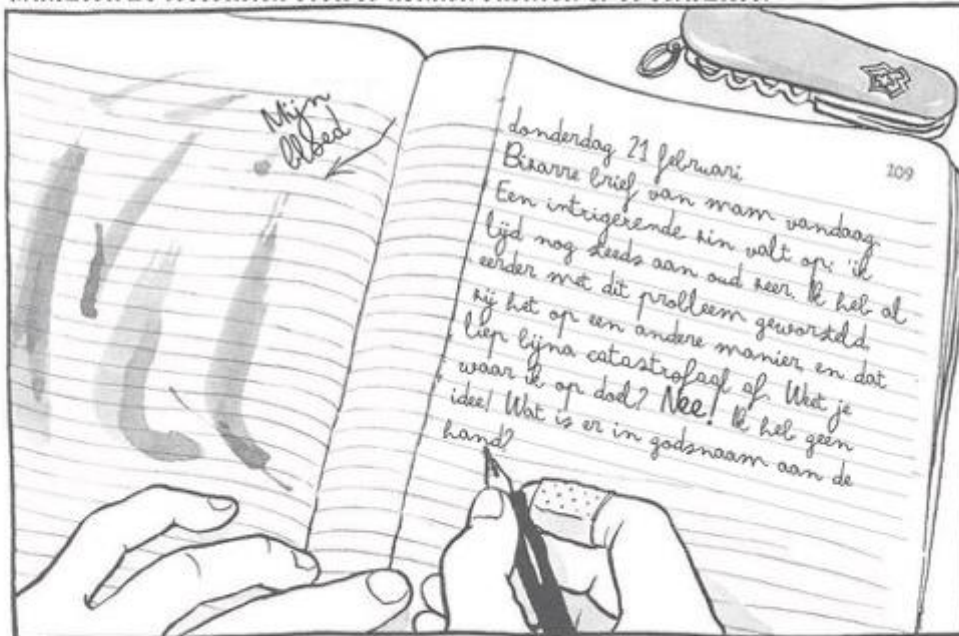
IK DEED EEN POGING DE PIJN TE VERZACHTEN DOOR EEN CADEAUTJE VOOR MEZELF TE KOPEN.



TERUGGEKOMEN OP MIJN KAMER SNEED IK MEZELF TOEN IK HET OPENKLAPTE.



IK SMEERDE HET BLOED IN MIJN DAGBOEK, INGENOMEN MET DE MOGELIJKHEID OM MIJN HARTZEER ZO LETTERLIJK OVER TE KUNNEN BRENGEN OP DE BLADZIJDE.



IK GING OP ALLE PUNTEN DIE MIJN MOEDER
MAAKTE EEN VOOR EEN IN.



ZE LICHTTE ME EEN PAAR DAGEN LATER IN.



DEZE ABRUPT EN ALLESOMVATTENDE HERZIENING VAN MIJN GESCHIEDENIS, EEN GESCHIEDENIS DIE ZEER RECENT AL COMPLEET HERZIEN WAS, VERBIJSTERDE ME. IK WAS CONFUUS.



MAAR IK WAS NOG NIET CONFUUS GENOEG
NAAR MIJN ZIN. DIT WAS MAKKELIJK OP TE
LOSSEN, GELIJK NADAT IK OPHING.

IK VOND ECHTER SNEL GENOEG EEN NOG
EFFECTIEVER VERDOVENDE MIDDEL.



HET IDEE DAT MIJN ARMZALIGE LEVENTJE ER OP GROTERE SCHAAL ENIGSZINS TOE DEEP WAS VREEMD, MAAR VERLEIDELIJK.

EN HALVERWEGE HET SCHOOLJAAR WAS IK VOLLEDIG VERLEID.



JOAN WAS EEN POEET EN EEN 'MATRIARCHIST'. HET OVERGROTE DEEL VAN DAT SEMESTER BESTEEDDE IK BIJ HAAR IN BED.



IK WAS VERDWAALD, DE KLUTS KWIJLT. HET WOORDENBOEK WAS EROTISCH GEWORDEN.

EEN PAAR VAN ONZE LIEVELINGSVERHALEN VAN VROEGER BLEKEN PROPAGANDA TE ZIJN...



... ANDERE WAREN PORNOGRAPHISCH. IN HET HELLE LICHT VAN MIJN OPKOMEND FEMINISME ZAG ALLES ER HEEL ANDERS UIT.



MIJN VERSTRENGELDE POLITIEKE EN SEKSUELE BLOEI WAS EEN WELKOME AFLEIDING.

HET NIEUWS VAN THUIS WERD STEEDS VERONTRUSTENDER.



VLAK NADAT JOAN EN IK SAMEN WAREN GAAN WONEN IN DE ZOMER, BELDE MAM OVER DE ECHTSCHIEDING.



TWEE WEKEN LATER VOLGDE HET TELEFOONTJE OVER HET ONGELUK.



IN DE LOOP DER JAREN ZOU MAM DE MEESTE VAN PAPS BOEKEN WEGGEVEN OF VERKOPEN.



LATER SCHREEF JOAN ER EEN GEDICHT OVER.

Jij, zittend in de bibliotheek
hebt je voeten op zijn bureau.

Je moeder komt binnen
haar gezicht wit en warm
zweeft behoedzaam boven de
badjas.

Ze zegt me een boek te kiezen.

Linnen band, grijs en turquoise
zwaar in mijn hand als het schild
van een schildpad vol klei.



VAN ALLE HONDERDEN BOEKEN OP DE PLAN-
KEN DENK IK DAT ZE GEEN BETERE KEUZE
HAD KUNNEN MAKEN.





OP VEEL VLAKKEN WAS MIJN MOEDERS KATHOLIEKE GELOOF MEER UITERLIJK VERTOON... ...MAAR ZE BESCHIKTE OVER EEN INSTINCTIEF VERMOGEN DINGEN OP TE GEVEN.



MISSCHIEF SPRAK HET GEDICHT HAAR OOK AAN DOOR DE TEGENSTELLING TUSSEN HET CATASTROFALE EN HET HUISELIJKE, HET FLUWELZACHTE; LEVEN MET MIJN VADER IN EEN NOTENDOP.



DE GEDACHTE DAT IK MIJN VADERS DOOD VER- OORZAAKT ZOU HEBBEN DOOR UIT DE KAST TE KOMEN LIJKT MISSCHIEN ONLOGISCH, VERGE- ZOCHT.

OORZAKELIJKHEID IMPLICEERT EEN CONNECTIE, CONTACT OP WAT VOOR MANIER DAN OOK. EN HOE REALISTISCH JE ZE OOK NEERZET, FICTIEVE PERSONAGES ZIJN ONGENAAKBAAR.



ER IS EEN FRAGMENT IN 'THE GREAT GATSBY' WAARIN EEN AANGESCHOTEN FEESTGANGER VOL VERRUKKING ONTDEKT DAT DE ENORME COLLECTIE BOEKEN IN GATSBY'S BIBLIOTHEEK NIET VAN KARTON ZIJN GEMAAKT.

'WELK EEN GRONDIGHEID, WAT VOOR EEN REALISME!' ROEPT HIJ UIT. 'HIJ WIST OOK WANNEER HIJ MOEST OPHOUDEN, - DE BLADZIJDEN ZIJN NIET OPGESNEDEN.'

WAT?

MIJN VADERS BOEKEN, DE HARDCOVERS MET HUN KAFLENDE STOFOMSLAGEN, DE PAPERBACKS MET HUN GEBROKEN RUGGEN, WAREN DUIDELIJK GELEZEN.

MAAR OP EEN BEPAALDE MANIER BETEKENDEN GATSBY'S ONGESCHONDEN BOEKEN EN MIJN VADERS BEDUIMELDE EXEMPLAREN HETZELFDE; EEN VOORLIEFDE VOOR FICTIE BOVEN DE REALITEIT.

ALS HET SPROOKJE VAN FITZGERALDS EIGEN LEVEN NIET IN EEN TRAGEDIË WAS VERANDERD, ZOUDEN ZIJN VERHALEN OVER DESILLUSIE MIJN VADER DAN NET ZO AANGESPROKEN HEBBEN?



GATSBY IN HET ZWEMBAD, ZELDA IN DE INRICHTING, SCOTT IN HOLLYWOOD: EEN ALCOHOLIST DIE OP ZIJN VIERENVEERTIGSTE ZOU STERVEN AAN EEN HARTAANVAL.



DIT TOEVAL OVERVIEL ME EN IK BESLOOT HET VERDER UIT TE ZOEKEN. ZE LEEFDEN HETZELFDE AANTAL MAANDEN, HETZELFDE AANTAL WEKEN. FITZGERALD WERD ALLEEN DRIE DAGEN OUDER.



ER WAS EEN ONBEZONNEN MOMENT WAAKOP IK SPEELDE MET HET IDEE DAT MIJN VADER ZIJN DOOD GETIMED HAD MET PIT IN ZIJN ACHTERHOOFD, EEN SOORT KRANKZINNIGE ODE.



EN IK WEET NIET OF IK BEREID BEN OM DIE LAATSTE, RAOFIJNE BAND TE VERBREKEN.



Notes

1. 'Queer' as such an all-encompassing term does not exist in Dutch dictionaries. Therefore, I have incorporated in a page of the VanDale myself, in between existing words and followed by the definitions found in English and English-Dutch dictionaries. This illusionary strategy was employed to make sure the target audience can comprehend the synchrony between the image of a page from a dictionary and the narrative, whilst making sure the many different definitions of a single word are not lost.
2. Throughout her memoir, Bechdel alternates between referencing her parents more formally (my father, my mother), and less so (mom, dad). I felt these alternations were very much deliberate, as she often uses the more formal version in situations in which she feels more distanced from them (for example on this page, when she discusses the side of her father she understood least), while the informal versions are employed in the opposite manner (she often calls her father 'dad' when discussing literature, a passion they shared, for example.) Therefore, I have tried to stay as close to the version she selected, with the occasional exception due to spatial limitations.
3. Bruce's fellow soldier speaks in with a slight accent. I have chosen an accent that is not too obvious or exaggerated to portray this in Dutch. This is a strategy that is more acceptable than it is adequate, but I felt this more naturalising strategy in this instance was a valuable addition to the character building through oppositions of Bruce Bechdel and to the setting.
4. Here, the stronger language is moved towards the front to convey Roy's personality and rebellious carelessness around his more-than-just-a-teacher, as there is no Dutch equivalent of 'shit' to mean anything of which one does not know what it is.
5. Throughout my translation I have made use of existing translations of direct quotes where possible, taken from translations I deemed most fit and credited in the Works Cited list.

An example is this extract from *De getemde feeks* from 1941, which I chose because of its archaic tone and language; it befits both the costumed version put up in the images and the stiff nature of Bechdel's parents in the memoir. However, I opted to adjust the spelling of "zoozeer" and "aanstaanden" to avoid the assumptions it could have been a spelling mistake.

6. This is one example of a solution of the spatial limitations. I have moved the title of the play one panel down, in order to retain information from those panels in the most efficient way.
7. In the instance of this interview with Gidlow, as well as with the poem by Wallace Stevens on pages 82 and 83, an existing Dutch translation could not be located. In both cases, I have translated them myself so as the reader would not be forced to deal with large pieces of English texts relevant to the plot. In the case of Stevens, since it is poetry, I have prioritised meaning and accuracy over metre and rhythm, as it is read by a character and not printed in a recreated page.
8. The words I used I did not actually look up in an index, but since English and Dutch share those Indo-European roots, I felt the difference would not harm the believability of the claim, as translating 'Index of Indo-European roots' as 'woordenboek' would have done. I have taken the liberty of removing all English words which do not exist in Dutch and replacing them with other words starting with 'o', which could be interpreted as sexual in some way.

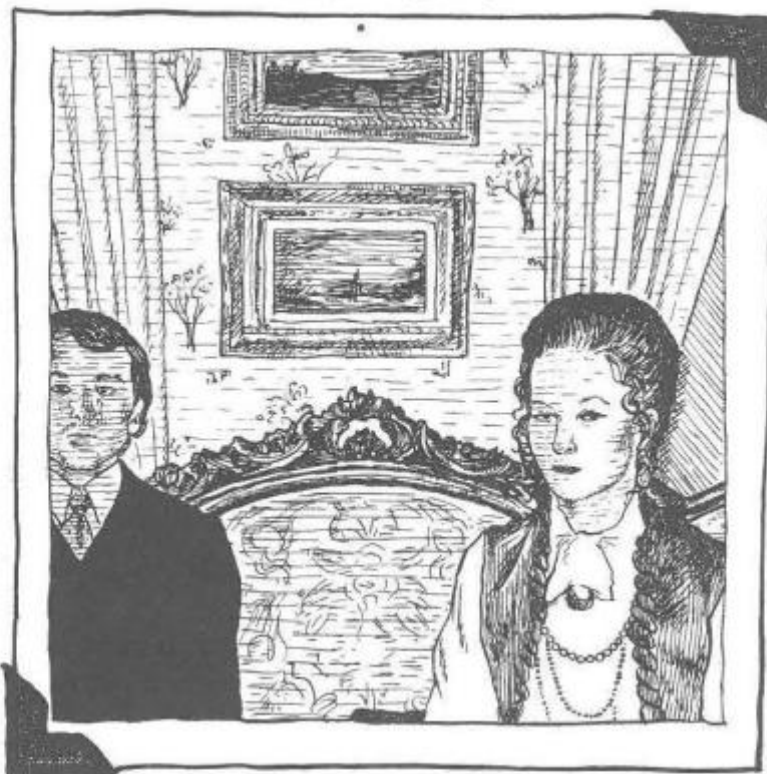
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Appendix: source text

CHAPTER 3



THAT OLD CATASTROPHE

MY FATHER'S DEATH WAS A QUEER BUSINESS--QUEER IN EVERY SENSE OF THAT MULTI-VALENT WORD.

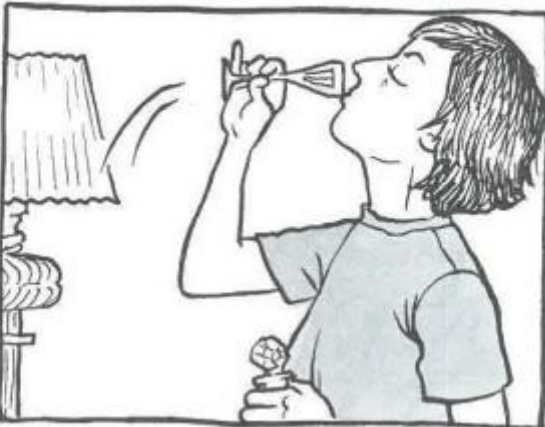
IT WAS STRANGE, CERTAINLY, IN ITS DEVIATION FROM THE NORMAL COURSE OF THINGS. IT WAS SUSPICIOUS. PERHAPS EVEN COUNTERFEIT.

IT PUT MY FAMILY IN A BAD POSITION, IT THWARTED AND RUINED EACH OF US IN PARTICULAR WAYS.

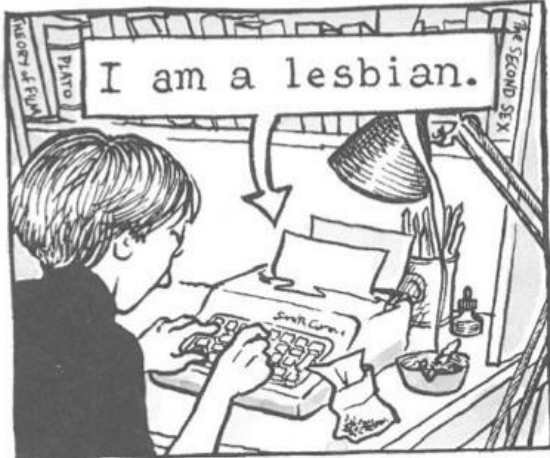
queer (kwēr), n. 1. Anything odd or out of the way. 2. Counterfeit money. Slang. 3. A rude fellow, a disreputable person. Dial. Eng. 4. An odd or eccentric person. Slang. 5. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 6. An Australian plum; also the wild parsnip. 7. The Australian whitebait. 8. A color framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 9. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 10. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 11. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 12. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 13. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 14. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 15. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 16. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 17. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 18. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 19. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 20. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 21. A truss framed with queenposts. 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A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 99. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost. 100. A truss framed with queenposts. See queenpost.

IT LEFT ME FEELING QUALMISH, FAINT, AND, ON OCCASION, DRUNK.

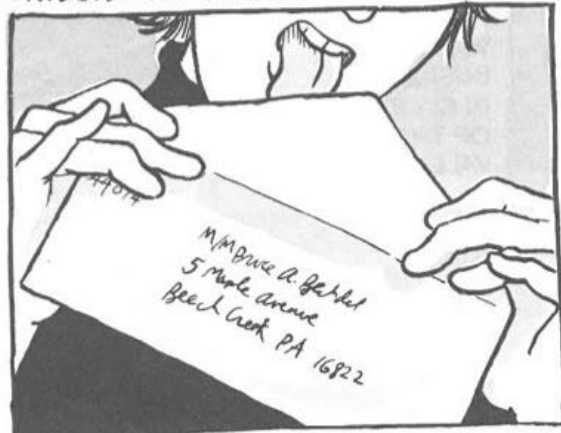
BUT MOST COMPELLINGLY AT THE TIME, HIS DEATH WAS BOUND UP FOR ME WITH THE ONE DEFINITION CONSPICUOUSLY MISSING FROM OUR MAMMOTH WEBSTER'S.



ONLY FOUR MONTHS EARLIER, I HAD MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MY PARENTS.

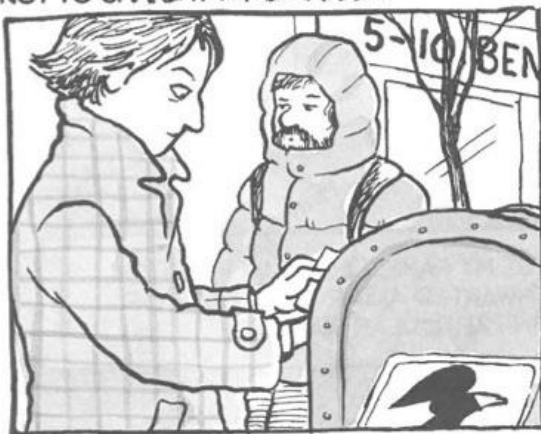


MY HOMOSEXUALITY REMAINED AT THAT POINT PURELY THEORETICAL, AN UNTESTED HYPOTHESIS.



BUT IT WAS A HYPOTHESIS SO THOROUGH AND CONVINCING THAT I SAW NO REASON NOT TO SHARE IT IMMEDIATELY.

THE NEWS WAS NOT RECEIVED AS WELL AS I HAD HOPED. THERE WAS AN EXCHANGE OF DIFFICULT LETTERS WITH MY MOTHER.

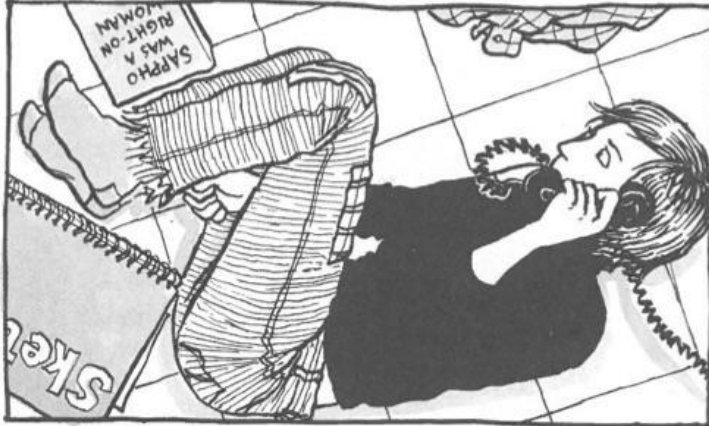


THEN A PHONE CALL IN WHICH SHE DEALT A STAGGERING BLOW.

I'D BEEN UPSTAGED, DEMOTED FROM PROTAGONIST IN MY OWN DRAMA TO COMIC RELIEF IN MY PARENTS' TRAGEDY.

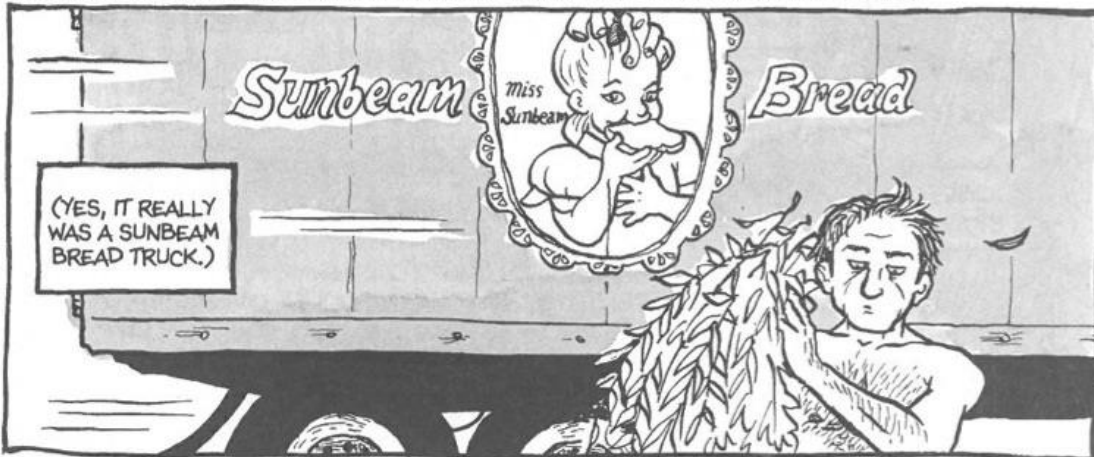


I HAD IMAGINED MY CONFESSION AS AN EMANCIPATION FROM MY PARENTS, BUT INSTEAD I WAS PULLED BACK INTO THEIR ORBIT.

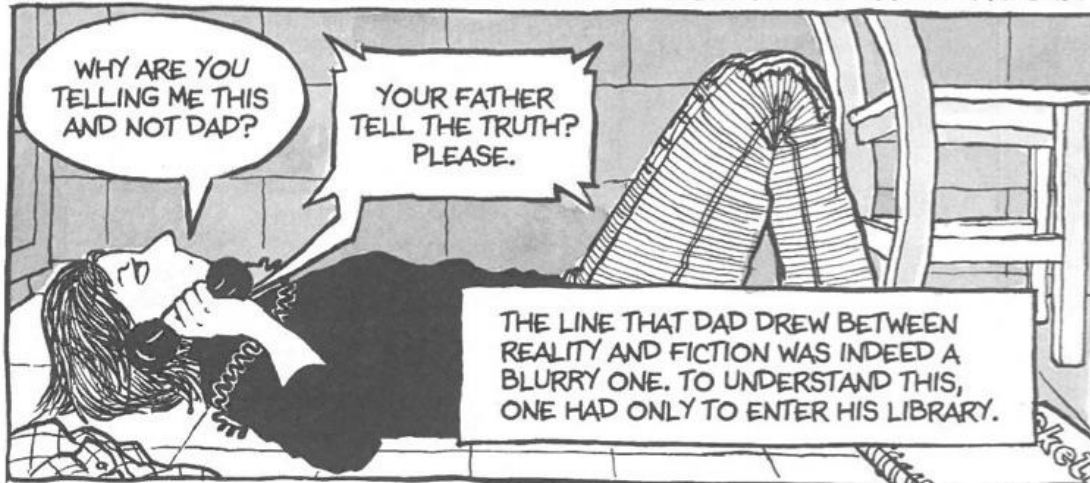


AND WITH MY FATHER'S DEATH FOLLOWING SO HARD ON THE HEELS OF THIS DOLEFUL COMING-OUT PARTY, I COULD NOT HELP BUT ASSUME A CAUSE-AND-EFFECT RELATIONSHIP.

IF I HAD NOT FELT COMPELLED TO SHARE MY LITTLE SEXUAL DISCOVERY, PERHAPS THE SEMI WOULD HAVE PASSED WITHOUT INCIDENT FOUR MONTHS LATER.



WHY HAD I TOLD THEM? I HADN'T EVEN HAD SEX WITH ANYONE YET. CONVERSELY, MY FATHER HAD BEEN HAVING SEX WITH MEN FOR YEARS AND NOT TELLING ANYONE.



FOR ANYONE BUT THE LANDED GENTRY TO REFER TO A ROOM IN THEIR HOUSE AS "THE LIBRARY" MIGHT SEEM AFFECTED. BUT THERE REALLY WAS NO OTHER WORD FOR IT.



...DID THAT REQUIRE SUCH A LEAP OF THE IMAGINATION? PERHAPS AFFECTATION CAN BE SO THOROUGHGOING, SO AUTHENTIC IN ITS DETAILS, THAT IT STOPS BEING PRETENSE...



THE LIBRARY WAS A FANTASY, BUT A FULLY OPERATIONAL ONE.



VISITORS ALWAYS ASKED THE SAME QUESTION ABOUT THE MASSIVE WALNUT BOOKCASE.



PART OF DAD'S COUNTRY SQUIRE ROUTINE INVOLVED EDIFYING THE VILLAGERS--HIS MORE PROMISING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

THE PROMISE WAS VERY LIKELY SEXUAL IN SOME CASES, BUT WHATEVER ELSE MIGHT HAVE BEEN GOING ON, BOOKS WERE BEING READ.



DAD WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT MANY WRITERS, BUT HE HAD A PARTICULAR REVERENCE FOR FITZGERALD.



MY MOTHER HAD SENT HIM A BIOGRAPHY OF FITZGERALD BEFORE THEY MARRIED, WHEN DAD WAS IN THE ARMY.

HE'D BEEN DRAFTED AFTER DROPPING OUT OF HIS GRADUATE ENGLISH PROGRAM, OVERWHELMED WITH THE WORKLOAD.

REFERENCES TO THE BIOGRAPHY CREPT INTO HIS LETTERS TO HER.



THE TALES OF SCOTT AND ZELDA'S DRUNKEN, OUTRAGEOUS BEHAVIOR CAPTIVATED HIM.

How did those two think of such things? Throwing garbage at the Murphy's garden party! They seem pathetic, fabulous, mediocre geniuses. No, not geniuses but talent. He had some drive that continued even through the tragedy. Poor, poor Zelda



IT COULD NOT HAVE ESCAPED MY FATHER'S NOTICE THAT DURING SCOTT'S OWN STINT IN THE ARMY HE WROTE HIS FIRST NOVEL AND BEGAN COURTING ZELDA.

DAD'S LETTERS TO MOM, WHICH HAD NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY DEMONSTRATIVE UP TO THIS POINT, BEGAN TO GROW LUSH WITH FITZGERALDESQUE SENTIMENT.



Do you know I love you. That made me feel so good I'll say it again. I love you I love you I love you, you crazy wonderful girl. I know what I need a drink. This would be our night to sit and drink and look at one another.

lots of time to read tomorrow. "Winter Dreams" is the best one so far. It is in "The Sensible Thing" was written for you and I, now, today. How did he know? But I am forget, you are George. She doesn't want to marry until they have money, so he does the "sensible thing" and breaks off the engagement but when he returns with his fortune, the old love is gone.

"The Rich Boy" is good, but they're all starting to sound alike. Think I'll read Gatsby again.

AFTER THE BIOGRAPHY, HE TORE THROUGH FITZGERALD'S STORIES, SEEING HIMSELF IN VARIOUS CHARACTERS.

Just finished this

*Helena Fontana
44 - N.U.*

DAD DOES NOT MENTION IDENTIFYING WITH THE CHARACTER OF JIMMY GATZ, BUT THE PARALLELS ARE UNAVOIDABLE.

go on and on about end of the story.

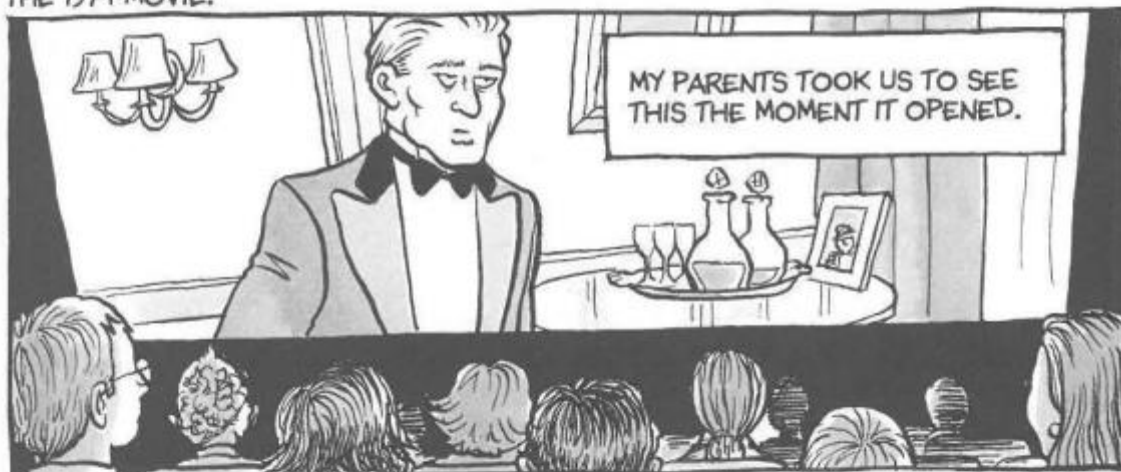
GATSBY'S SELF-WILLED METAMORPHOSIS FROM FARM BOY TO PRINCE IS IN MANY WAYS IDENTICAL TO MY FATHER'S.

I must have

LIKE GATSBY, MY FATHER FUELED THIS TRANSFORMATION WITH "THE COLOSSAL VITALITY OF HIS ILLUSION." UNLIKE GATSBY, HE DID IT ON A SCHOOLTEACHER'S SALARY.



MY FATHER EVEN LOOKED LIKE GATSBY, OR AT ANY RATE, LIKE ROBERT REDFORD IN THE 1974 MOVIE.

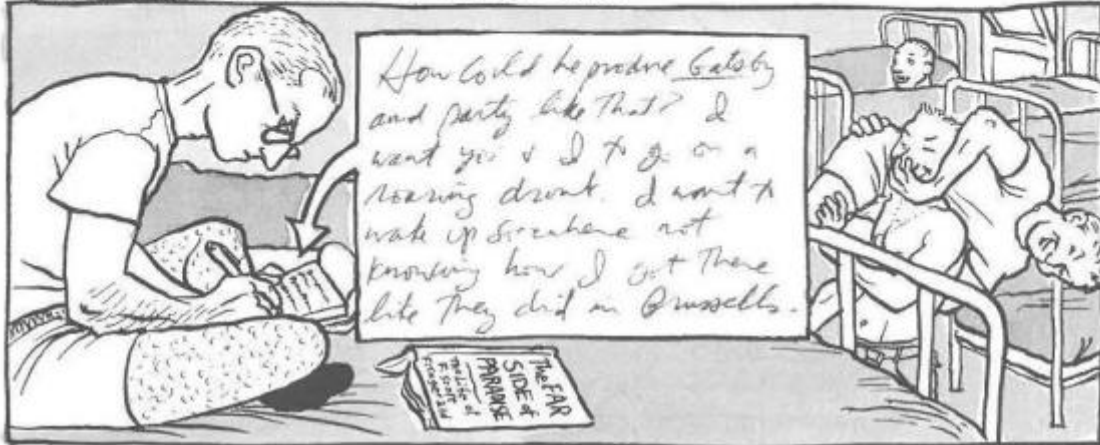


PERHAPS IT SEEMS LIKE A COLOSSAL ILLUSION ON MY PART TO COMPARE MY FATHER TO ROBERT REDFORD.

ZELDA FITZGERALD ALSO HAD A FLUID CHARM, IT WAS SAID, WHICH ELUDED THE STILL CAMERA.



I THINK WHAT WAS SO ALLURING TO MY FATHER ABOUT FITZGERALD'S STORIES WAS THEIR INEXTRICABILITY FROM FITZGERALD'S LIFE.



SUCH A SUSPENSION OF THE IMAGINARY IN THE REAL WAS, AFTER ALL, MY FATHER'S STOCK IN TRADE.



IF MY FATHER WAS A FITZGERALD CHARACTER, MY MOTHER STEPPED RIGHT OUT OF HENRY JAMES--A VIGOROUS AMERICAN IDEALIST ENSNARED BY DEGENERATE CONTINENTAL FORCES.



A PLAIN, DULL, BUT WEALTHY YOUNG WOMAN FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE SMOOTH-TALKING FORTUNE HUNTER, MORRIS TOWNSEND.



IN A TWIST ON THE USUAL HETEROSEXUAL TROPE...

...CATHERINE IS THE LOVER, AND MORRIS, THE BELOVED.



I EMPLOY THESE ALLUSIONS TO JAMES AND FITZGERALD NOT ONLY AS DESCRIPTIVE DEVICES, BUT BECAUSE MY PARENTS ARE MOST REAL TO ME IN FICTIONAL TERMS.



AND PERHAPS MY COOL AESTHETIC DISTANCE ITSELF DOES MORE TO CONVEY THE ARCTIC CLIMATE OF OUR FAMILY THAN ANY PARTICULAR LITERARY COMPARISON.



MY PARENTS SEEMED ALMOST EMBARRASSED BY THE FACT OF THEIR MARRIAGE. THERE WAS NO STORY, FOR EXAMPLE, OF HOW THEY MET.





IN FACT, HE PERVERSELY AVOIDED ADDRESSING MY MOTHER WITH EVEN HER GIVEN NAME.

I WITNESSED ONLY TWO GESTURES OF AFFECTION BETWEEN THEM. ONCE MY FATHER GAVE MY MOTHER A CHASTE PECK BEFORE LEAVING ON A WEEKEND TRIP.



AND ONE TIME MY MOTHER PUT HER HAND ON HIS BACK AS WE WERE WATCHING TV.



THESE STRAY RENTS IN THE OTHERWISE SEAMLESS FABRIC OF THEIR ANTAGONISM...



...WERE VERY NEARLY AS UNNERVING AS THE ANTAGONISM ITSELF.



WHAT WAS THAT?

SOUNDS LIKE HE KNOCKED A STACK OF BOOKS OFF THE DESK.

CRASH!

MY PARENTS MET, I EVENTUALLY EXTRACTED FROM MY MOTHER, IN A PERFORMANCE OF *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*.



...AND TO CONCLUDE, WE HAVE 'GREED SO WELL TOGETHER THAT UPON SUNDAY IS THE WEDDING DAY!

IT WAS A COLLEGE PRODUCTION. MY FATHER HAD A BIT PART AS ONE OF THE MEN. MOM PLAYED THE LEAD.



I'LL SEE THEE HANG'D ON SUNDAY FIRST.

IT'S A TROUBLING PLAY, OF COURSE. THE WILLFUL KATHERINE'S SPIRIT IS BROKEN BY THE MERCENARY, DOMINEERING PETRUCHIO.



I SAY IT IS THE MOON THAT SHINES SO BRIGHTLY.

I KNOW IT IS THE SUN THAT SHINES SO BRIGHTLY.

I SPECULATE ON WHAT ATTRACTED MY FATHER MORE--THE ROLE, THE ACTRESS, OR MY MOTHER HERSELF.

SAY AS HE SAYS, OR WE SHALL NEVER GO!

EVEN IN THOSE PREFEMINIST DAYS, MY PARENTS MUST HAVE FOUND THIS RELATIONSHIP MODEL TO BE PROBLEMATIC.



THEY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN APPALLED AT THE SUGGESTION THAT THEIR OWN MARRIAGE WOULD PLAY OUT IN A SIMILAR WAY.



IF THE TAMING OF THE SHREW WAS A HARBINGER OF MY PARENTS' LATER MARRIAGE, HENRY JAMES'S THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY RUNS MORE THAN A LITTLE PARALLEL TO THEIR EARLY DAYS TOGETHER.

ISABEL ARCHER, THE HEROINE, LEAVES AMERICA FOR EUROPE. SHE'S FILLED WITH HEADY NOTIONS ABOUT LIVING HER LIFE FREE FROM PROVINCIAL CONVENTION AND CONSTRAINT.

ISABEL TURNS DOWN A NUMBER OF WORTHY SUITORS, BUT PERVERSELY ACCEPTS GILBERT OSMOND, A CULTURED, DISSIPATED, AND PENNILESS EUROPEAN ART COLLECTOR.



MY PARENTS MADE A TRIP TO PARIS SOON AFTER THEIR WEDDING, TO VISIT AN ARMY FRIEND OF MY FATHER'S.

LATER, MY MOTHER WOULD LEARN THAT DAD AND HIS FRIEND HAD BEEN LOVERS.



THEY HAD A TERRIBLE FIGHT IN THE CAR.





BUT TOO GOOD FOR HER OWN GOOD, ISABEL REMAINS WITH GILBERT...



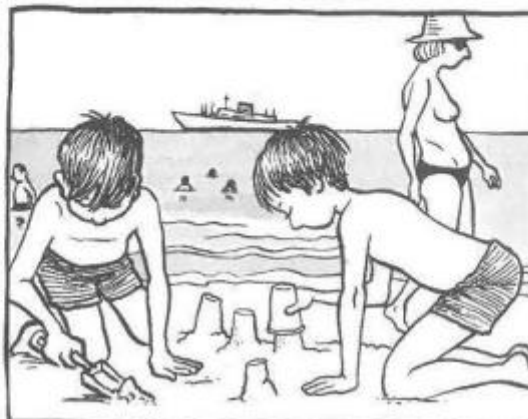
...AND DESPITE ALL HER YOUTHFUL HOPES TO THE CONTRARY, ENDS UP "GROUND IN THE VERY MILL OF THE CONVENTIONAL."



IT WAS A THRILLING TRIP. IN SWITZERLAND I TALKED MY PARENTS INTO BUYING ME HIKING BOOTS.



IN CANNES, I ARGUED COMPELLINGLY FOR THE RIGHT TO EXCHANGE MY TANK SUIT FOR A PAIR OF SHORTS.



SUCH FREEDOM FROM CONVENTION WAS INTOXICATING. BUT WHILE OUR TRAVELS WIDENED MY SCOPE, I SUSPECT MY PARENTS FELT THEIR OWN DWINDLING.



PERHAPS THIS WAS WHEN I CEMENTED THE UNSPOKEN COMPACT WITH THEM THAT I WOULD NEVER GET MARRIED, THAT I WOULD CARRY ON TO LIVE THE ARTIST'S LIFE THEY HAD EACH ABDICATED.



THAT IS IN FACT WHAT CAME TO PASS, BUT NOT IN THE WAY ANY OF US HAD EXPECTED.



I'D BEEN HAVING QUALMS SINCE I WAS THIRTEEN...

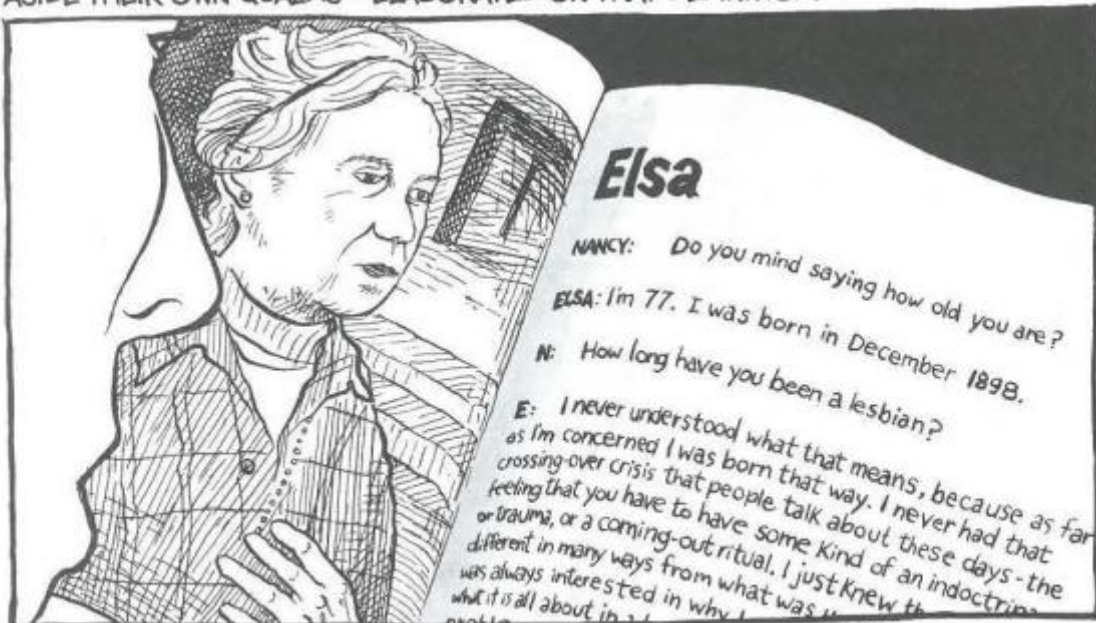
...WHEN I FIRST LEARNED THE WORD DUE TO ITS ALARMING PROMINENCE IN MY DICTIONARY.



lesbian

'les·bi·an \ 'lez-bē·ən\ *adj*, often cap 1 : of or relating to the reputed homosexual band associated with Lesbos 2 [fr. the reputed homosexual band associated with Lesbos] : of or relating to homosexuality between females
 'lesbian *n*, often cap : a female homosexual
 les·bi·an·ism \ -ə·niz·əm\ *n* ; female homosexuality
 lese maj·es·ty or lèse ma·jes·té \ 'lēz-'maj-ə-stē\ *n* ; an offense committed against a sovereign power b : an offense

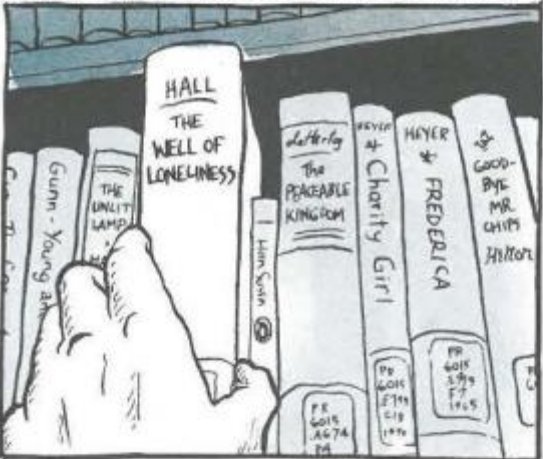
BUT NOW ANOTHER BOOK--A BOOK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAD COMPLETELY CAST ASIDE THEIR OWN QUALMS--ELABORATED ON THAT DEFINITION.



THAT FIRST VOLUME LED QUICKLY TO OTHERS.



THIS BOOK REFERRED TO OTHER BOOKS, WHICH I SOUGHT OUT IN THE LIBRARY.



I FOUND A FOUR-FOOT TROVE IN THE STACKS WHICH I QUICKLY RAVISHED.



A FEW DAYS LATER I SCREWED UP MY COURAGE AND BOUGHT ONE.



ONE DAY IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I COULD ACTUALLY LOOK UP HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CARD CATALOG.



AND SOON I WAS TROLLING EVEN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, HEEDLESS OF THE RISKS.





I WENT TO A MEETING OF SOMETHING CALLED THE "GAY UNION," WHICH I OBSERVED IN PETRIFIED SILENCE.

BUT MY MERE PRESENCE, I FELT, HAD AMOUNTED TO A PUBLIC DECLARATION. I LEFT EXHILARATED.



IT WAS IN THAT TREMULOUS STATE THAT I DETERMINED TO TELL MY PARENTS. KEEPING IT FROM THEM HAD STARTED TO SEEM LUDICROUS ANYWAY.



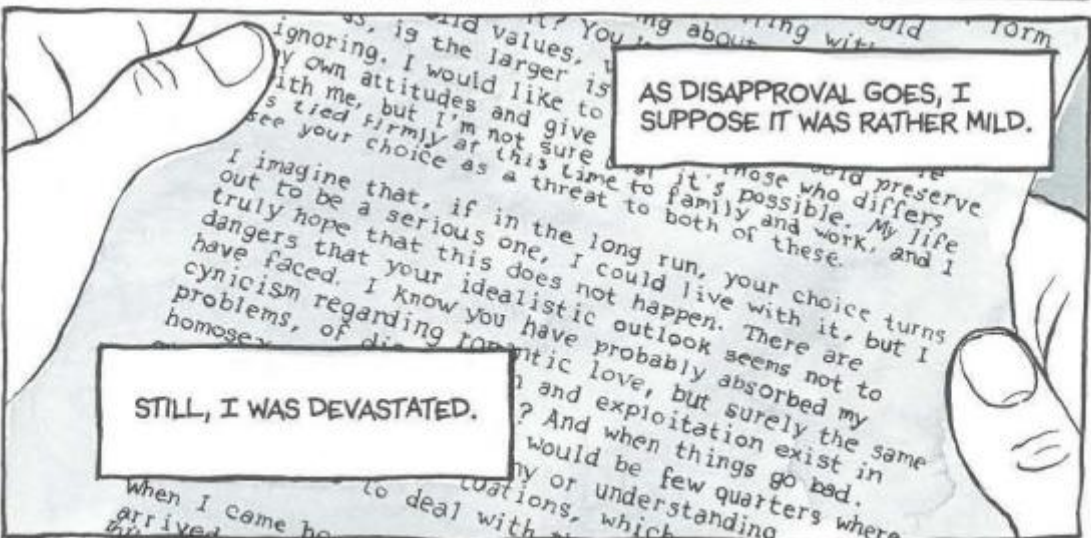
I DID IT VIA LETTER--A REMOTE MEDIUM, BUT AS I HAVE EXPLAINED, WE WERE THAT SORT OF FAMILY.

MY FATHER CALLED AFTER RECEIVING IT. HE SEEMED STRANGELY PLEASSED TO THINK I WAS HAVING SOME KIND OF ORGY.



MOM WOULDN'T COME TO THE PHONE.

BUT HER RETURN EPISTLE ARRIVED A WEEK AND A HALF LATER.



HER P.S. INSTRUCTED ME TO DESTROY THE LETTER.



IN AN ATTEMPT TO SALVE THE WOUND, I BOUGHT MYSELF A PRESENT.



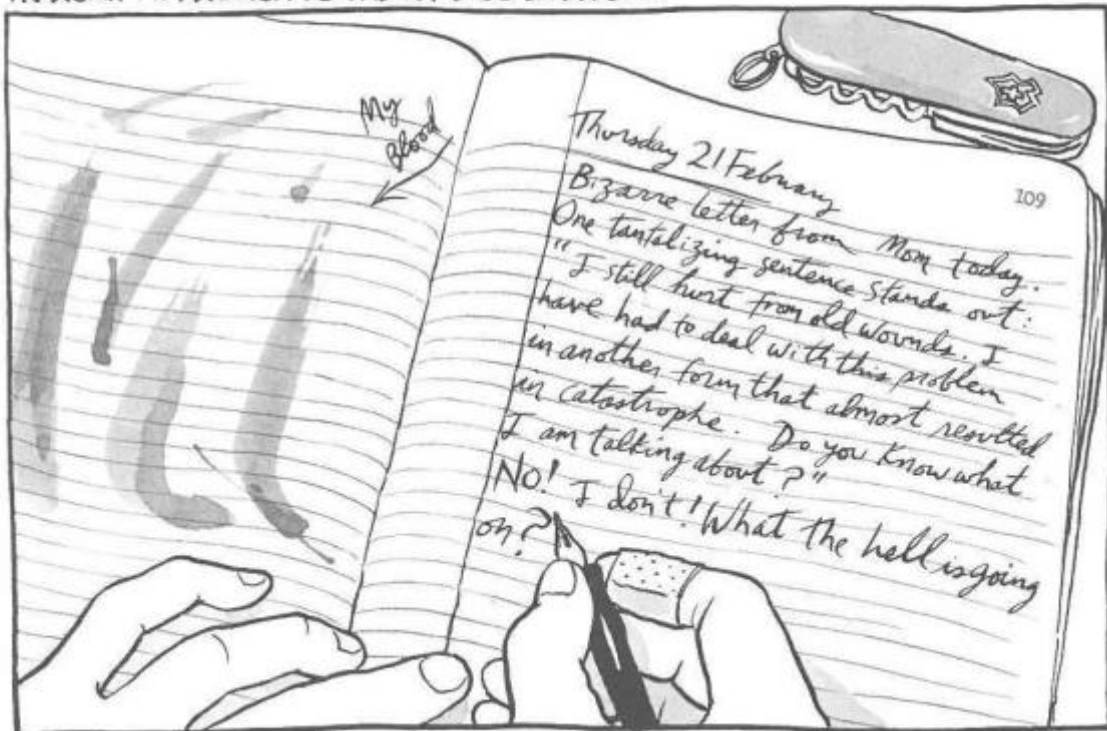
A SYMBOL OF SELF-RELIANCE? AT ANY RATE, IT SEEMED LIKE SOMETHING A LESBIAN WOULD HAVE.



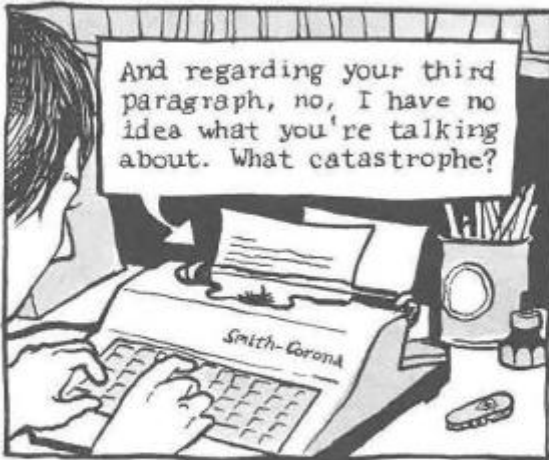
OPENING IT BACK IN MY ROOM, I ACCIDENTALLY CUT MY FINGER.



I SMEARED THE BLOOD INTO MY JOURNAL, PLEASED BY THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSMIT MY ANGUISH TO THE PAGE SO LITERALLY.



I RESPONDED TO MY MOTHER'S LETTER POINT BY POINT.



SHE FILLED ME IN A FEW DAYS LATER.



THIS ABRUPT AND WHOLESALE REVISION OF MY HISTORY--A HISTORY WHICH, I MIGHT ADD, HAD ALREADY BEEN REVISED ONCE IN THE PRECEDING MONTHS--LEFT ME STUPEFIED.



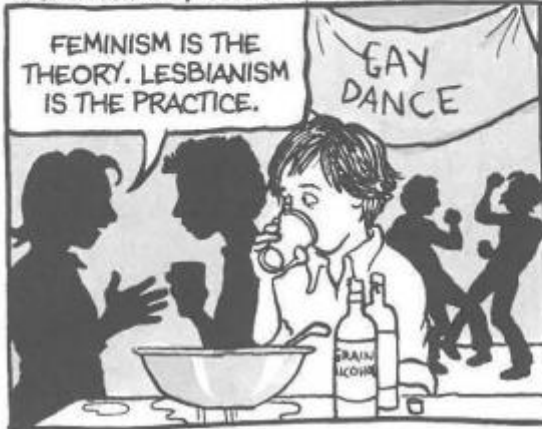
BUT NOT QUITE STUPEFIED ENOUGH--A CONDITION WHICH I REMEDIED UPON HANGING UP THE PHONE.

SOON, HOWEVER, I DISCOVERED AN EVEN MORE POTENT ANESTHETIC.



THE NOTION THAT MY SORDID PERSONAL LIFE HAD SOME SORT OF LARGER IMPORT WAS STRANGE, BUT SEDUCTIVE.

AND BY MIDTERM I HAD BEEN SEDUCED COMPLETELY.



JOAN WAS A POET AND A "MATRIARCHIST." I SPENT VERY LITTLE OF THE REMAINING SEMESTER OUTSIDE HER BED.



THIS WAS STREWN WITH BOOKS, HOWEVER, IN WHAT WAS FOR ME A NOVEL FUSION OF WORD AND DEED.

I LOST MY BEARINGS. THE DICTIONARY HAD BECOME EROTIC.

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD STORIES WERE REVEALED AS PROPAGANDA...



...OTHERS AS PORNOGRAPHY. IN THE HARSH LIGHT OF MY DAWNING FEMINISM, EVERYTHING LOOKED DIFFERENT.



THIS ENTWINED POLITICAL AND SEXUAL AWAKENING WAS A WELCOME DISTRACTION.

THE NEWS FROM HOME WAS INCREASINGLY UNSETTLING.



SOON AFTER JOAN AND I HAD MOVED IN TOGETHER FOR THE SUMMER, I GOT MOM'S CALL ABOUT THE DIVORCE.

AND TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT, THE CALL ABOUT THE ACCIDENT.



OVER THE YEARS, MY MOTHER HAS GIVEN AWAY OR SOLD MOST OF DAD'S LIBRARY.



LATER, JOAN WROTE A POEM ABOUT IT.

You're sitting in the library
feet up on his desk.

Your mother comes in
her face warm and white
floating gingerly over her
bathrobe.

She tells me to choose a book.

Cloth-bound, grey and turquoise
heavy in my hand as a turtle shell
filled with mud.



OUT OF THE HUNDREDS OF BOOKS ON THE SHELVES, I DON'T THINK SHE COULD HAVE MADE A BETTER CHOICE.





IT'S ABOUT THE CRUCIFIXION.

"...AND THE GREEN FREEDOM OF A COCKATOO UPON A RUG MINGLE TO DISSIPATE THE HOLY HUSH OF ANCIENT SACRIFICE."

(HONEST TO GOD, WE HAD A PAINTING OF A COCKATOO IN THE LIBRARY.)

IN MANY WAYS MY MOTHER'S CATHOLICISM WAS MORE FORM THAN CONTENT...

...BUT SACRIFICE WAS A PRINCIPLE THAT SHE GRASPED INSTINCTIVELY.



"SHE DREAMS A LITTLE AND SHE FEELS THE DARK ENCROACHMENT OF THAT OLD CATASTROPHE AS A CALM DARKENS AMONG WATER-LIGHTS."



HELEN, KEEP THIS. I'LL PICK SOMETHING ELSE.

NO, NO. TAKE IT.

PERHAPS SHE ALSO LIKED THE POEM BECAUSE ITS JUXTAPOSITION OF CATASTROPHE WITH A PLUSH DOMESTIC INTERIOR IS LIFE WITH MY FATHER IN A NUTSHELL.



DAD'S DEATH WAS NOT A NEW CATASTROPHE BUT AN OLD ONE THAT HAD BEEN UNFOLDING VERY SLOWLY FOR A LONG TIME.

THE IDEA THAT I CAUSED HIS DEATH BY TELLING MY PARENTS I WAS A LESBIAN IS PERHAPS ILLOGICAL.

CAUSALITY IMPLIES CONNECTION, CONTACT OF SOME KIND. AND HOWEVER CONVINCING THEY MIGHT BE, YOU CAN'T LAY HANDS ON A FICTIONAL CHARACTER.

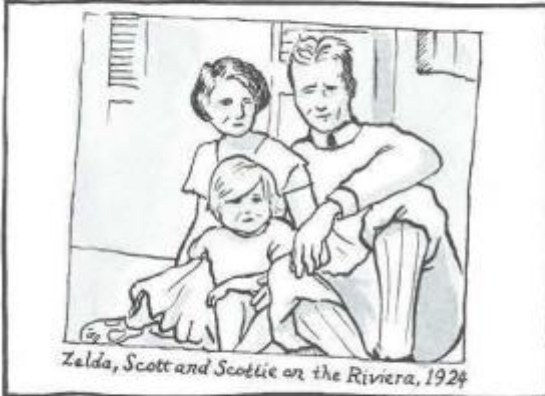


THERE'S A SCENE IN *THE GREAT GATSBY* WHERE A DRUNKEN PARTY GUEST IS CARRIED AWAY BY THE DISCOVERY THAT THE VOLUMES IN GATSBY'S LIBRARY ARE NOT CARD-BOARD FAKES.



BUT IN A WAY GATSBY'S PRISTINE BOOKS AND MY FATHER'S WORN ONES SIGNIFY THE SAME THING--THE PREFERENCE OF A FICTION TO REALITY.

IF FITZGERALD'S OWN LIFE HADN'T TURNED FROM FAIRY TALE TO TRAGEDY, WOULD HIS STORIES OF DISENCHANTMENT HAVE RESONATED SO DEEPLY WITH MY FATHER?



GATSBY IN THE POOL. ZELDA IN THE ASYLUM. SCOTT IN HOLLYWOOD, AN ALCOHOLIC, DYING OF A HEART ATTACK AT FORTY-FOUR.



STRUCK BY THE COINCIDENCE, I COUNTED OUT THEIR LIFESPANS. THE SAME NUMBER OF MONTHS, THE SAME NUMBER OF WEEKS...BUT FITZGERALD LIVED THREE DAYS LONGER.



FOR A WILD MOMENT I ENTERTAINED THE IDEA THAT MY FATHER HAD TIMED HIS DEATH WITH THIS IN MIND, AS SOME SORT OF DERANGED TRIBUTE.



AND I'M RELUCTANT TO LET GO OF THAT LAST, TENUOUS BOND.

