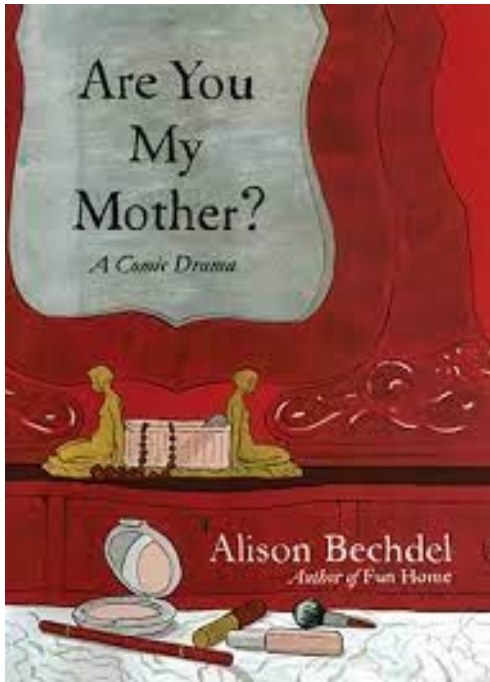


ARE YOU MY MOTHER: A COMIC DRAMA



Adult Graphic Novel

By Alison Bechdel

ISBN: 978-0-618-98250-9



Book Summary:

A middle-aged woman discovers a lot about her mother and herself, while writing a memoir about her father's suicide.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity; alternate sexualities; and controversial political and social commentary.

4
/5

Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
6	I felt kind of like I did twenty years earlier, when I was preparing to tell her I was a lesbian. ..."Yeah, His bisexuality, the suicide, you don't mind, do you?"
27	"My mother was disguised in a bearskin. Then her penis popped out and castrated me."
50	"Do you ever feel angry at your father for committing suicide?"
52	"Aren't you worried the guys will see us?" "Those nimrods. They think you're my boyfriend." The illustration on the middle right of the page depicts two women sitting in front of a car. They are leaning in to kiss each other.
62	"I know it's partly the lesbian thing. Like she's afraid if I get a word in edgewise, it'll be 'cunnilingus.'"
70	"So when you see this gay cartoonist's work in the New Yorker..." ...of other cartoonists, of other gay and lesbian writers, of anyone who was at all like me or was doing anything remotely similar to what I was doing. ..."People don't need cartoons about lesbians anymore! You can watch them on TV!"
71	"So, yeah. When all of a sudden the New Yorker starts running these blasé post-gay cartoons, I feel like, Fuck! What have I been doing with my life? Am I going to have to get a job?"
72	"It's a defense mechanism. It' like people who become homophobic because they can't accept their own homosexual desire."
100	And also, sometimes, after sex. ..."Now do you feel relaxed?" The illustration on the middle left-side of the page depicts two men hugging each other, wearing underwear only.
101	"I dreamed last night that she wanted to have a sexual experience with someone else first."
111	I felt some shame at this glimpse of how the news of my own lesbianism must have shocked my mother. ..."But the worst time was right after my parents died, Dr. Malcom was feeding me antidepressants and sleeping pills."
113	The illustration on the bottom left-side of the page depicts two naked women hugging each other in bed. The text within the image reads: But when Eloise began to make love to me, I couldn't feel her. The illustration on the bottom-right-side of the page depicts a nude woman from a profile view. She is angrily kicking wall. <i>See Figure 1.</i>
114	The illustration on the top left-side of the page depicts a woman's nude buttocks. The illustration on the top right-side of the page depicts a nude woman standing

Page	Content
	<p>in a three-quarters view, looking at a hole in a wall. Another nude woman is sitting cross-legged on the bed. <i>See Figure 2.</i></p>
123	<p>"Have you read that lesbian columnist, Norah Vincent?" ...Vincent was a libertarian journalist becoming well-known at this time in part for her critique of left-leaning gay and lesbian activists.</p>
124	<p>"They were talking about abortion, and she said fetuses are more endangered than gays right now." "Yeah, great. The only way gay people get mainstream airtime is if they're spouting some conservative horseshit." ..."She's entertainment! She wouldn't be on TV if she were saying, y'now, pro-choice stuff." I always have to think for a second before I say "pro-choice" or "pro-life." I get them confused. Abortion has always been a rather abstract concept for me. I've never had to think about birth control, never had a moment's anxiety or excitement that I might get pregnant. I had long since given up trying to debate abortion with Mom. None of my feminist arguments could sway her.</p>
125	<p>So it was highly unusual when Mom took a bus to Washington to protest the fourth anniversary of Roe V. Wade. I was sixteen.</p>
140	<p>My mother did not tell me, did not suggest in any way, that my father had proposed an abortion.</p>
143	<p>To my great relief, I can't reproduce it here because my mother threw it out. It depicts a doctor examining a little girl. Examining, in particular, her genitalia. No--cleaning her genitalia. I remember writing a caption: "Doctor cleaning a little girl's tee-tee place." I was amazed even at the time by my ability to imagine such an unimaginable scenario. In fact, that was part of my excitement--realizing the apparently unlimited potential of my own mind to invent. In this gynecological fantasy, I was both the powerful male subject and the vulnerable female object, though I would not have admitted the latter.</p>
144	<p>Until now, the memories have been separate: the time mom stopped kissing me, the time mom found the dirty picture.</p>
156	<p>Later, I would blame my social awkwardness on my homosexuality. But now I speculate that being a lesbian actually saved me. When I came out to Mom in college, she responded with a letter. The ending pretty much sums it up.</p>
168	<p>"Ha! Maybe it's a way to work out penis envy." ..."Oh, please. Penis envy." "Who'd want one of those things dangling between their legs?" ...The idea of penis envy, of course, can be seen as a reaction formation, a defense against what feminists would later call "womb envy." Envy of the power to give birth. "That's where your foreskin was attached. When you were a baby, the doctor cut it off."</p>

Page	Content
	The illustration on the bottom of the page depicts three children of various ages, in a bathtub. A young boy is standing up in the bathtub as a woman washes his abdomen with a washcloth. His penis is exposed.
169	<p>My younger brothers' penises, scrotums, and absent foreskin were interesting enough. But what I really envied were all these words.</p> <p>The illustration on the bottom right-side of the page depicts a young girl sitting in a bathtub from a view looking down into the water. Her vulva is exposed.</p>
170	<p>"The specter of this kind of male judgement, along with misnaming and thwarting of her needs by a culture controlled by males, has created problems for the woman writer: problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival." ... "...your strong tongue and slender fingers reaching where I had been waiting years for you in my rose-wet cave..."</p>
174	(Winnicott's use of the pronoun "he" here, to denote the baby, is an aberration...)
181	"But I have to tell you, they'll be cartoons about lesbians."
182	I understood that she was upset more about my father's homosexuality than mine.
184	<p>The illustration on the top of the page depicts a nude woman laying on her back, over the edge of the bed with her right arm hanging down. Her right breast is exposed. Another nude woman is sitting on the bed with the other woman's toe in her mouth. <i>See Figure 3.</i></p>
188	<p>The illustration on the top of the page depicts a clothed woman sitting with a sketchpad in her hand, drawing a representation of the nude woman lying on the bed in front of her with her buttocks exposed.</p> <p>The illustration on the middle-left-side of the page depicts a woman with a shirt on, showing a piece of paper to another woman who is lying beside her with her right breast exposed.</p> <p>The illustration on the middle-right-side of the page depicts the same individuals described above, kissing. The nude woman's left breast is exposed.</p> <p>The illustration on the bottom-right-side of the page depicts the same individuals described above. The fully clothed woman is lying on her back on the bed and the nude woman's leg is depicted straddling her.</p>
191	The illustration on the bottom of the page depicts a nude female and a nude male laying together in a bed. They are depicted from the waist upward. The woman is smoking a cigarette.
192	The illustration on the bottom of the page depicts two nude females sharing a cigarette while sitting on a bed. They are covered by a blanket from the waist downward.
195	This vivid glimpse of my father's shame is as searing for me as the time, one morning when I was nine or ten, that I saw him naked.
220	<p>The illustration on the top of the page depicts two women kissing in a field.</p> <p>The illustration on the bottom-left-side of the page depicts the same individuals</p>

Page	Content
	<p>described above in a zoomed in view. The two women are laying in the grass, one atop the other.</p> <p>The text at the top of the image reads: Eloise was at least as ambivalent as I was about intimacy, which gave her courtship a certain compelling urgency.</p>
221	The illustration on the top of the page depicts the same individuals described above. One woman is laying on her back in the grass while the other woman is laying on top of her, looking at her.
222	<p>The illustration on the top-left-side of the page depicts two women in the front seat of a car, seen from a profile view. The two women are kissing.</p> <p>The illustration on the bottom of the page depicts the same individuals described above. The two women are nude. One of the women is laying on her stomach on the bed while the other woman is kneeling beside the bed as they kiss each other.</p>
224	A few weeks later, Donna and I kissed and slept together but did not have sex.
225	<p>The illustration on the top-middle of the page depicts two nude women lying in bed from a bird's-eye-view, one atop the other, as they kiss. One of the women's buttocks is exposed.</p> <p>The illustration on the top-right side of the page depicts the same individuals described above from a zoomed-in profile view. One of the women is laying with her head between the other woman's thighs and her hands gripping her buttocks. The other woman's pubic hair is shown.</p> <p>The illustration on the bottom-right-side of the page depicts the same individuals described above. They are kneeling on the bed, facing each other. One of the women is fully-clothed while, pulling the other woman's shirt off over her head.</p> <p><i>See Figure 4.</i></p>
226	For someone having this much sex, I felt curiously impotent.

Profanity	Count
Bitch	1
Fuck	10
Shit	3



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4