

Wonderland

Next fall will see Geneseo's first gender-neutral dorms. Admissions forms already have checkboxes for transgender. Among other cultural signifiers I intend to explore, these changes indicate a climate shift in how Americans view gender. Many indigenous cultures have always allowed more flexibility in gender, such as the Native American tribes recognition of the berdache, biological males with nonmasculine roles within their society.

What intrigues me most in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* is her struggle to identify herself in terms of her gender. She first establishes her assumptions on what define men and women based on cultural stereotypes, and from here moves to cross these boundaries in an effort to balance out her father's own gender misadventures. She spends the novel rejecting the feminine stereotype in favor of a more masculine form.

We see echoes of this in Moore's *Watchmen*. (I mean echoes only insofar as it is much more thoroughly developed in *Fun Home*, obviously *Watchmen* was written first). Laurie's mother attempts to force her into a feminine role by looking pretty, wearing the short skirts with her uniform. All the female heroes in *Watchmen* find themselves to be more useful as sex objects than actual crime fighters. They are idealized women in spandex and high heels. This idea of femininity is complicated by their superhero bodies, which do not match the soft female bodies we may find in other media.

My current plan is to explore the portrayal of women within these two graphic novels, (drawing on others as my research expands) and how they fit it into as well as reject the gender roles assigned to them.

Initial Texts:

Fun Home

Watchmen

"Investigating the Engendered Superhero Body"

Bailey, Garrick and James Peoples. *Humanity*. 5th ed. Wadsworth,

Thomson Learning :Australia, 2000.

Kottak, Conrad Philip. *Mirror for Humanity*. 6th ed. McGraw Hill: Boston, 2008.

Anthropology. Ed. Elvio Angeloni. 30th ed. McGraw Hill Contemporary Learning Series: Iowa, 2007.