

## English 230: Milestone 4 (for Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>)

First, a recap of Milestone 3:

1. *Media manipulate and massage.* “You will learn to trust my voice. *You will learn to trust my voice.*” There’s a fine line between the two.
2. *Media stage player stories.* Stories are baked into media; they also emerge from them. Compare in-game narratives (diegetic) with player narratives (non- or extra-diegetic).
3. *Message and play don’t always resonate.* We might call this “ludonarrative dissonance.” But more interesting, mechanics are expressive (part of identity and story), not just functional (some buttons you press).

Here are three more themes to recall as we proceed with the course:

*Images are traces.* Like fingerprints or tire tracks, they point to a physical relationship between past and present and leave a residue of events or activities. Recall Bechdel’s approach to photographs, which she manually copies in a cross-hatched style that’s more detailed than her cartoons in nearby panels. From this perspective, images are also imitations; they are references we somehow copy as well as source materials for memories and storytelling.

*Images are ways of seeing, too.* They are central to how we perceive the world. They address us, and we experience and interpret them in context. Although characters in “Translated, from the Japanese” and *Fun Home* never look at us (“break the fourth wall”), they draw our attention to sensory education—to, for instance, seeing as a habituated behaviour that people learn tacitly through role modelling. Seeing is a normalized practice that can be subverted. Alison rejects the “look” Bruce imposes on her. And seeing is social. Alison and Bruce share “crisscrossing” looks, and Alison hopes for a queer mutual recognition between them. Meanwhile, in “Translated,” the narrator is unsure how to interpret the father’s blank face, not knowing whether to smile or apologize for their son’s use of complete sentences.

*Images are visual knowledge.* We make images with marks (graphical) and screens or pages (optical), and we use them as a type of visual language to communicate. They’ve substantial power this way. Perhaps they reflect dominant ways of seeing, or maybe they project new ones. How they communicate is crucial here. Consider, for example, the size, colour, and arrangement of panels on a page and the use of gutters to transition between them. To express a vivid moment, Tomine dedicates an entire panel (and lots of blue) to a single panel midway through his story. To articulate awkward intimacy with a rush of hope, Bechdel increases her panel density to 12 on page 220. These aren’t just design decisions; they’re forms of knowing.

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*Terminology from Milestone 4:* graphical, optical, perceptual, verbal, and mental images; the roles of gutters, panels, tracks, spreads, captions, bubbles, bleed, and horizon lines in comics; images as traces, perspectives, experiences, forms of address, representations, imitations, composition, and language; graphic memoir; sensory education (learning to see; seeing “correctly”; queer visual knowledge; mutual recognition)