

**Ryan, Marie-Laure and Jan-Noël Thon. *Storyworlds Across Media*. University of Nebraska Press, 2014. Paper, 380 pp., \$35.00.**

The discipline of literary criticism and literary studies balances between the interpretation of new creations and revisiting canonical works. One of the hanging dangers of using tools defined by canon is what happens when they're applied to contemporary works that don't look like books anymore. *Storyworlds Across Media* is the latest tool kit offered for the analysis of creative works that extend beyond the scope of traditional format and medium. The book is a collection of scholarly essays focused on dissecting the components of constructed storyworlds, as well as applying taxonomies and new descriptors to works of fiction that exist outside the established definitions of genre and medium.

While factions of scholars may consider (at least privately) prime-time television, fan fiction, and video games as second class and beneath the value of study, this book strides past those arguments and sets about the business of studying narratives spread over multiple media forms and genres, for example, studying the successes and failures of the television show *Lost* and its attempts to create a multimodal (or in the parlance of the book, "transmedial") experience that tells a story both within single media formats as well as between them. The idea is that a chorus of stories creates a more immersive experience than, say, a feature film or a novel, hence the word "across" in the title of the collection.

We've had storyworlds with us for a long time. Ryan and Thon effectively keep the collection anchored in established theory (citing scholars such as Guthrie and van Leeuwen, Rajewsky, Jenkins, and Werner, for those keeping score), but where this collection legitimizes its positions within traditional, it also ventures into otherwise murky realms of analyzing storycraft as it exists across traditional text, graphic novels, websites, video games, film, and television. Medium is crucial. While not all examples studied in this collection are contemporary collisions of media (such as Patrick Colm Hogan's article outlining the storyworld of *Hamlet*), the central focus of these articles involves how the settings of these fictional pieces are shared among various authors in independent works and without explicit cooperation. In some instances, such as with *Dr. Who*, cooperation and collaboration between copyright holders is legally prohibited. The theoretical approaches regarding storyworld and transmedial fiction are applied to a striking range of examples, demonstrating their versatility for analyzing multi-authored, multimodal works and simultaneously commenting on how rapidly media and fiction are evolving.

The resulting book is seminal for transmedia and narratology scholars, and reveals how much work needs to be done in studying multimodal fiction like *Breaking Bad* or *Star Wars*. As fascinating as this collection is, without

a bit of background in literary criticism the book may prove an onerous read as it touches on literary studies, media studies, semiotics, and cultural studies. For the Sunday lit crit enthusiast, this collection is a fascinating exploration of new analytical ideas that help explain the power and technique of media collisions now available in modern storytelling.

—Kris Baranovic

**Kremer, Gary R. *Race & Meaning: The African American Experience in Missouri*. University of Missouri Press: Columbia, 2014. Hardcover, 288 pp., \$35.00.**

Gary R. Kremer's compilation of essays takes the reader on a journey of the African-American struggles in Missouri from around the time of the Civil War through the mid-twentieth century. He documents the lives of common African Americans who struggled to rise above the chains of slavery and integrate their race with the rest of American society. Through the use of archival records and interviews with those mentioned in the book or their descendants, he provides a concise written portrayal of transition from slavery to freedom.

Various aspects of the race are detailed throughout Kremer's book, including their views on education, religion, family, politics, etc. Education was extremely problematic. Not only did African-American children have to deal with segregation in the school system, they had subpar materials and teachers. Educational funding was lacking in many areas, especially if education was to provide anything but vocational training. There were some African Americans who negatively viewed those within their own race who attended liberal arts universities and promoted the "White man's values." This compilation of essays makes clear that the African-American family and religion were at the core of their beliefs, and oftentimes their lives revolved around it.

Despite the struggles and obstacles that African Americans had to endure and overcome once slavery ended, many persevered to not only better themselves but their race. They were able to secure funding for schools that not only focused on vocational skills but liberal arts and law school education. Some were able to secure financing to develop an all African-American resort at Lake Placid. Others took to political causes such as women's voting rights and endorsing candidates.

Kremer documents how the common, not-so-well-noted-in-history individual had a profound effect on the African-American population. These individuals came from slavery or were born right at the end of slavery and were forced to become part of a society in which they were not welcome. Their strength to overcome adversity during the Civil Rights era is remark-