why works such as García's *On the Graphic Novel* are absolutely vital
to keep the dialogue open and understand the nature of comics today.

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Jan-Noël Thon, *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture*, Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016). 527 pp. ISBN: 978-0-80-327720-5 (€50.99)

With the book version of his PhD dissertation, *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture*, Jan-Noël Thon attempts to give a profound theoretical and methodological foundation to a research field that has become increasingly prevalent in narratology and media studies. The extensive length of the book already hints at the thoroughness with which Thon tackles the terminological and conceptual jumble that results from the interdisciplinarity of the project of a transmedial narratology. Since 'a significant part of contemporary media culture is defined by narrative representations' (xviii), the study aims at bridging the gap between the widespread awareness of narrativity being a phenomenon found across a variety of media other than literature, and the shortage of truly transmedial – rather than medium-specific – research. Thon himself follows a 'media-conscious' (22) approach, avoiding both the traps of 'media blindness' and 'media relativism' (20) that render transmedial narratology either useless (because media specificities are being completely ignored) or impossible (because media are supposedly too different to be addressed by the same terms and concepts in any way).

Throughout the book, the author 'attempts to adhere to both a principle of continuity and a principle of neutrality' (23), that is, carrying on the insights and terminologies of existing research and ensuring compatibility with a maximum number of other theories and methods. While the latter seems to be a particularly demanding task, its importance cannot be overstated for a research project that deals with a wide variety of representational phenomena in various media that have almost all been addressed separately by either classical narratology, media studies or medium-specific narratological studies, such as film narratology. For Thon, the key to maintaining this neutrality is to always consider the 'granularity' (22) of any concept or research question to distinguish if it is supposed to be universally applicable, or rather specifically designed for a particular in-depth analysis. Accord-

ingly, Thon himself never fails explicitly to contextualise and specify the range of his own concepts, both in the theoretical and the analytical parts of his study.

Regarding the former, Thon shows remarkable skill not only in 'illustrat[ing] the terminological dilemma into which contemporary narratology has maneuvered itself' (233), but also in giving a concise and comprehensible overview of previous research, pinpointing its shortcomings as well as highlighting the commonalities and incompatibilities of different approaches. Considering the most fundamental concepts for Thon's own study, he broadly agrees with existing research on transmedial narratology such as that of Werner Wolf or Marie-Laure Ryan, opting for a slightly less formalistic and more pragmatic approach by, for example, removing some criteria from Ryan's minimal definition of narrative, and putting emphasis on the ever-changing nature of media, which he identifies as distinguished mostly by convention. As for transmediality, Thon follows both Wolf's and Irina Rajewsky's definitions of the term as encompassing generally medium-unspecific phenomena that are still necessarily realised in medium-specific ways. Following this terminological framing of transmedial narratology, the author locates its main objective in the analysis of 'transmedial strategies of narrative representation' (xviii), rather than what they represent, or the media in which they are realised – which Thon identifies as the two prevalent foci of existing research.

Thon's masterful way of dealing with previous research continues in the main parts of the book, which focus on three 'particularly salient transmedial strategies of narrative representation' (xviii) and are each separated into a contextualising theoretical chapter and a chapter providing detailed analyses of exemplary contemporary films, comics and video games. The choice of media is based on the claim that 'the cultural-aesthetic and socio-economic influence of films, comics, and video games in contemporary media culture is quite significant, [although] it would certainly have been possible to focus on other narrative media, as well' (16). Besides answering pragmatic considerations, the restriction to only three media and three representational strategies mirrors Thon's explicitly 'modular' (26) approach. Although his 'book's main offering consists of a "toolbox" for the analysis of prototypical aspects of narrative across media' (6), it does not claim to be exhaustive, and rather emphasises the need for future studies to cover not only other aspects of narrative representation, but also the same aspects as they are realised in other media than film, comics and video games.

Yet, although the succinct chapter headings indeed show a focus on no more than the three representational strategies of story worlds, narrators and subjectivity, Thon's study, on closer inspection, touches on many more aspects of narrative, such as metalepsis or the problem of authorship. Even the three main aspects, however, are not strictly confined to their respective chapters, as Thon highlights their inter-relations, as shown by the fact that he reuses many of his primary examples in several chapters – such as Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, which figures in all three parts of the study. While this choice of examples offers a welcome feeling of continuity to readers that may not be familiar with each medium, the author always backs his claims with the analysis of further examples to avoid an overemphasis of work-specific idiosyncrasies. Despite the strict grouping of example analyses according to their respective media, Thon's comprehensive theoretical framings ensure that his study overall complies with his demand for a media-conscious transmedial narratology to 'not merely aspire to be a collection of medium-specific narratological terms and concepts but, rather, examine a variety of strategies of narrative representation across a range of conventionally distinct narrative media while at the same time acknowledging both similarities and differences in the ways these media narrate' (31).

Thus, Thon's analysis not only proves the wide range of narrative complexity that all discussed media possess in all three aspects, but also demonstrates their media-specific ways of creating these complexities. Although the author diligently supplies useful summaries of the key points of both these individual as well as the transmedial representational strategies discussed at the end of each chapter, those might have been better placed in the surprisingly short conclusion of the book, which indeed merely presents an outline of 'Roads Not (Yet) Taken' (327), that is, suggestions for future research. Hence, despite Thon's valuable theoretical and analytical work, the study lacks the promised 'toolbox' for narratological analysis, leaving the reader with the task of compiling such a box themselves from a range of tools that are still scattered in a nevertheless reasonably equipped workshop.

Another critical remark can be made regarding how Thon's eagerness for precision tends to sacrifice readability, leading to rather long and intricate sentences. Furthermore, the author's insistence on the narrative complexity of media that have gained comparatively little narratological attention – such as comics and video games – is understandable given the 'literature bias' (341) still often found in narratology; yet,

the explicit emphasis on this and other reoccurring aspects in most of the example analyses at times unnecessarily inflates an otherwise flawless study.

Overall, with *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture*, Thon successfully fills the gap of a foundation for transmedial narratology that is remarkable as much for its precise critical re-examination of established narratological terms and concepts as for its own clear terminology and conceptualisations that provide fertile ground for future research.

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Thierry Bellefroid, ed., *L'Âge d'Or de la bande dessinée belge: La Collection du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège* (Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2015). 96 pp. ISBN: 978-2-87-449232-7 (€19.50)

In just under one hundred glossy, high-quality, oversized pages, this collection gives a quick glimpse at some of the most interesting works of original comic art held at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège (BAL) and a sustained, informative introduction to some of the main issues that a museum must think through when considering making comic art part of its collection. The book is not a catalogue – indeed, those are the opening words of the preface – but a celebration of one rich part of the museum's collection and an insight into what it means that a major art museum has dedicated space to comics.

The second part of the book, which constitutes about a third of its total pages, includes seventeen single-page readings of original art by several critical francophone artists: Comès, Devos, Franquin, Graton, Hergé, Hermann, Jacobs, Morris, Peyo, Sirius, Tillieux and Will. In each of these readings, as the section heading puts it, 'des auteurs d'aujourd'hui lisent des auteurs d'hier' [authors of today read authors of yesterday]. These brief readings are generally personal in approach, but their attention to influential artists who are considerably less famous in anglophone audiences helps familiarise audiences outside of the francophone world with some important names.

Some of these essays are remarkably insightful, given the space afforded to them. Take for example Yslaire's (Bernard Hislaire) analysis of a page by Franquin. Yslaire is himself an extraordinary Belgian cartoonist whose work is less recognisable than it should be to anglophone