

To sum up, the reader expecting an intermedial narratology of the comic from a transmedial narratological perspective will be disappointed. The study would have profited, firstly, from editing and revisions, secondly, from a systematic comparative approach. Instead of proving its own premise – that comics are a complex narrative genre – it would be more interesting to compare these text-to-text/image adaptations with other intermedial narrative forms that do the same, starting with illustrated books via film to video games.

Ronja Bodola, Potsdam

**Christian Ludwig, Frank Erik Pointner (Hgg.), Teaching Comics in the Foreign Language Classroom** [WVT-Handbücher zur Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik, Band 4], Trier: WVT, Trier, 2013, 308 S.

This is the fourth volume in the important series initiated in 2007 for the EFL-literature classroom in Germany: *WVT-Handbücher zur Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik*. The series aims to supply the much-needed dialogue between literature and cultural studies scholarship, theory of literature pedagogy (*Literaturdidaktik*) and methodology for the EFL classroom. For as Hallet and Nünning write in the introduction to the first volume, the series aims to combat the damage to pedagogy caused by the »Abkopplung der Fachdidaktiken von den Fachwissenschaften«.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth volume *Teaching Comics in the Foreign Language Classroom* builds, together with the other books in the series, a bridge between university, teacher education and school on the basis of state-of-the-art conceptual research combined with ideas for the EFL classroom. Ten substantial chapters follow an extremely brief introduction by the editors. Ludwig and Pointner boldly assert at the outset: »Today, as far as their literary, aesthetic and intellectual qualities are concerned, comics stand on equal footing with other modern media such as film [...]« (1). Considering that all media forms, without exception, offer trash as well as great art, it is perplexing that teaching with comics and graphic novels (terms that are often used interchangeably) is taking so long to earn respectability in Germany. Comics, undeservedly the Cinderella of narrative forms, are refreshingly and capably introduced to the teaching and research community with this volume.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Hallet, Ansgar Nünning, »Einleitung«, in: dieselben (Hgg.), *Neue Ansätze und Konzepte der Literatur- und Kulturdidaktik*, Trier: WVT, 2007, 1–10, hier 4.

The first chapter, *Comics in Language Learning: The Pedagogical, Didactic, and Methodological Framework*, initiates the dialogue with an overview of current paradigms, principles and practices of EFL teaching. Bernd Rüschoff refers to »output-oriented, creative and participatory language learning« (23), but also stresses, with reference to the potential of graphic novels, that »successful language learning depends on comprehensible, relevant, and authentic input« (22). We then turn to a literary discussion of the medium, with Frank Erik Pointner's *Teaching Comics as Comics*. The »intricacies of their narrative conventions« (27) are expertly elucidated and demonstrated with close reference to excerpted panels and pages from the works discussed. The generous number of Figures in black and white as well as colour throughout this edited volume deserves recognition as an outstanding feature. Excerpting and reproducing images is a time-consuming process for authors and editors and a costly process for the publisher, but makes all the difference to a work of this kind. Pointner's tentative description of picturebooks – »the idiosyncrasy of that medium seems to be that in most cases the pictures are mere illustrations of the verbal texts, so that the text could very well be grasped without the accompanying images« (30) – will of course cause picturebook scholars to gasp. It is surprising that the author who is also a volume editor did not revise his assumption, as the following chapter suggests in great detail the exact opposite: Katja Heim's »Comics in Young Learners' English Lessons«. Referring to comics scholar McCloud<sup>2</sup>, and picturebook scholars Nikolajeva and Scott<sup>3</sup>, Heim sums up the main arguments for teaching young learners with visual narratives as follows:

While symmetrical word-picture relations and rich pictures, such as in picture-specific picture books [a picture narrative with words] and comics, are suitable for teaching vocabulary explicitly or implicitly, complementary, counterpointing or contradictory word-picture relations will often lend themselves more easily to authentic communication in class. (75)

»The Benefits of Comics for Language Learning at the Lower Secondary Level: A Practical Approach« is contributed by Dominik Rumlich. This is another highly useful chapter, with many practical examples for language teaching, though I could not find the promised appendix (96). Rumlich illustrates, with delightful examples (particularly Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*), that »comics are unique in that they contain contem-

---

<sup>2</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art*, New York: Morrow, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Nikolajeva, Carole Scott, *How Picture Books Work*, New York: Psychology Press, 2001.

porary oral language that is made permanent through writing« (96). I would argue that Rumlich's suggestion that comics »practice the use of the present progressive« (101) should be treated with circumspection. Employing the present progressive (continuous aspect of the present) is certainly authentic usage when describing a single picture in detail, for example a full-page panel. However, comic strips tell a story – and a narrative sequence, as Bland explains in reference to comics, is authentically retold in the present simple:

The sequence of events in any narrative, such as film or book, is normally retold in the present simple. Sequential art can be a helpful mnemonic for the use of the present simple, as student teachers often confuse when to use and when not to use the continuous aspect in classroom discourse.<sup>4</sup>

The book is valuable in offering in most chapters close readings of particular works that could be highly useful in the EFL-literature classroom in Germany. Sandra Boschenhoff in »Teaching Literature the Graphic Way: How Comic Adaptations Can Support the Reading of Literature« focuses on reimaginings of classics in the comic medium, particularly works by Edgar Allan Poe. As all other contributors to this volume, the author impresses upon the reader that »for students, comic reading is not only a natural process of absorbing information, but also an intensive intellectual challenge if done properly, *i. e.*, through observing the visual and textual representational domain in detail« (126). Pascal Fischer's chapter »Shakespeare Comics in the Classroom« is an outstanding contribution on the affordances of the comics medium, and with regard to Shakespeare convincingly highlights that »a confinement to the printed word is as inadequate as a paralyzing reverential fear towards a supposed original« (162). For me, Fischer's close readings of scenes from *Hamlet* in different comics versions illustrate more precisely what comics offer in the education context than boxes of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities could. Nonetheless, practitioners may find the lists of activities at the end of each chapter a useful aid. Maria Eisenmann's contribution is thematically focussed: »Shadows and Superheroes in 9/11 Graphic Novels«. The author describes the rich response of graphic artists to the strongly visual characteristics of the traumatising event of 9/11:

Graphic novels that deal with 9/11 implement its representation not only thematically, but also to a formal and structural extent. In a technically sophisticat-

---

<sup>4</sup> Janice Bland, *Children's Literature and Learner Empowerment. Children and Teenagers in English Language Education*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, 99–100.

ed way, 9/11 graphic novels synthesize the language of cinema, the sensibilities of 9/11 novels and the appeal of mass media such as radio or TV. (185)

In the chapter »The Reconstruction of Inter- and Transcultural Spaces in Adrian Tomine's and Toufic El Rassis's Graphic Novels«, Christian Ludwig studies the intercultural potential of graphic fiction that allows the EFL classroom to tackle diversity topics such as gender and sexuality, and Asian-American and Arab-American experience. Ludwig's arguments for the use of comics as an aid in the deconstruction of stereotypes is convincing. However his rather excessive use of footnotes (38 in a single chapter) might impede reading fluency for some readers. Claudia Drawe's chapter »South Africa's Living Icon in a Comic – Nelson Mandela«, written of course while Mandela was still alive, focuses on *Nelson Mandela. The Authorised Comic Book*. I particularly appreciated the thoughtful and meaningful integration of the Teaching Ideas in this contribution. This is a pedagogical feature of the entire volume, but seems merely added on in some of the other chapters. Finally Julian Sudhoff considers »Comics in the Content and Language Integrated Classroom – Exploring Synergies«. The author describes how comics can be assets for accessible communication of content: »the combined verbal and visual nature of comics may support scaffolding and bridging processes in CLIL-environments. The comic may help to level out the initial imbalance of CLIL students' cognitive ability and their foreign language proficiency« (301). As the EFL-literature classroom in Germany might also be considered CLIL – learning literature as well as language – this argument is one that applies to the volume as a whole.

A concluding single-page glossary that illustrates graphic novels and comics' terminology is sadly limited to only eight terms (308). Much more could have been offered here to support teachers, student teachers and teacher educators in their efforts to take on board the terms so cleverly introduced in the various chapters. There is also *no index* – a lapse which is so common in German *Fachdidaktik* publications that its absence may not even be noticed by readers who are not used to this important aid. This is negligence on the part of the publishers, for while certain terms, due to the lack of an index, are explained repetitively (e.g. constructivism, scaffolding, pre-activity ...), other terms are used in rather different ways in the various chapters (e.g. multimodal, multimedial, plurimediality ...) If the editors cannot spare the time to compile an index – an extremely time-consuming undertaking – the publishers must do so at the editors' expense. This is indispensable scholarly practice and makes all the difference to the reader friendliness of a book – especially an edited volume that is necessarily episodically structured. I also find biographical data on the contributors is missing.

In a review of the predecessor volume in this series, *Romandidaktik – Theoretische Grundlagen, Methoden, Lektüreakregungen*, the reviewer Kinzel questioned the wisdom of continuing to publish *Fachdidaktik* scholarship in German rather than English<sup>5</sup>. The series editors Hallet and Nünning seem to have noted the point, for the volume under discussion here is the first of the series to be published in English. The chapters are written in a highly readable and knowledgeable style, and student teachers as well as teachers will surely be grateful for this teacher-development opportunity – reading scholarship in English that is highly relevant for German EFL classrooms. Consequently the volume is a must in all good teacher education libraries in Germany and beyond.

Janice Bland, Münster

**Greta Olson, Ansgar Nünning (Hgg.), New Theories, Models and Methods in Literary and Cultural Studies** [WVT-Handbücher zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium, 16], Trier: WVT, 2013, 238 S.

Plant man als Lehrende/r einschlägige literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Seminare, so beherzigt man durchaus einmal folgende unausgesprochene Regel: Wer schon im Vorfeld für kleine Teilnehmerzahlen sorgen möchte, wird in seinem Veranstaltungstitel das Wörtchen *Theorie/theory* unterbringen. Möchte man im Seminargeschehen Momente lastender, lähmender Stille erzeugen, flechte man eben dieses Wörtchen elegant in den Diskurs ein. Frei nach Forster könnte man also versucht sein, den gegenwärtigen Stellenwert literatur- und kulturwissenschaftlicher Theorie im Lehrbetrieb wie folgt zu karikieren: »First the author died, and then the class died of theory.«

Dem gegenüber schlägt nun der überraschend optimistische Befund zu Buche, den Ansgar Nünning und Greta Olson in ihrer exzellenten »Introduction: Approaches to Literature and Culture in the Post-Theory Era« (1–18) zu zehn Aufsätzen mit Gedanken über aktuelle Formen und Praktiken in Literatur- und Kulturtheorie konstatieren: »theory, far from being dead, is alive and kicking« (6). Um dies zu dokumentieren, wurden in der jüngeren Vergangenheit immer wieder Versuche unternommen, aktuelle literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche *turns* zu erfassen und mit ihnen die Fassaden mancher in die Jahre gekommener Theoriegebäude, die vom

---

<sup>5</sup> Till Kinzel »Rezension zu Wolfgang Hallet, Ansgar Nünning (Hgg.), *Romandidaktik – Theoretische Grundlagen, Methoden, Lektüreakregungen*, 2009«, in: *Informationsmittel (IFB): digitales Rezensionsorgan für Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*, [http://www.wvttrier.de/top/Rezension\\_zu\\_LKD\\_3\\_Till\\_Kinzel.pdf](http://www.wvttrier.de/top/Rezension_zu_LKD_3_Till_Kinzel.pdf).