more comprehensible than the readers’ present. They also, however, poke gentle fun at their slightly pathetic and outdated Victorian protagonists.

All texts that Grasl analyses are finally rather ambivalent even if they appear to confirm certain schemata readers might have of the Victorians. What the study thus makes perfectly clear is that schemata are never reliable and constantly under construction and that they can therefore always be changed, adapted, added to or disrupted. All novels discussed by Grasl are occupied with the construction of these schemata and thereby a retrospective of the Victorian era. All of them have different and often intrinsically ambiguous ideological agendas. Thus, as Grasl points out, easy categorisations of the novels in question are impossible. Her study thereby challenges the commonplace that Victorian-centred novels published between the world wars are predominantly anti-Victorian while the novels of the 1950s go back to an unquestioning nostalgic glorification of the Victorian era.

The study is well-researched, highly readable and presents a valuable addition to the research already conducted on twentieth-century Victorian-centred fiction. It celebrates the interdisciplinarity of Cultural Studies at its best.

Christina Flotmann-Scholz, Paderborn

Sandra Eva Boschenhoff, Tall Tales in Comic Diction – From Literature to Graphic Fiction. An Intermedial Analysis of Comic Adaptations of Literary Text [Studies in English and American Media, 13]. Trier: WVT, 2013, 304 S.

Boschenhoff’s book starts from the observation that »today« comics have »evolved into a mass-media phenomenon « (1), influencing other art forms and media genres. Furthermore, comics are a »sophisticat[ed]«, »hybrid« (2) medium. In contrast to »monomedial« (5) literary narratives, they combine »the conciseness of words and the immediateness of pictures« (*ibid*.). So it is long overdue, she argues, to present a concise »comic narratology« (*ibid*.). This book wants to fill this gap and to »construe universally valid narratological categories for graphic fiction« (10).

Yet the major concern and central thesis seem to lie elsewhere. Given its frequent repetitions, the aim appears to be directed at the »self-appointed guardians of Western civilizations« (1, cf. 19) »to overcome iconophobia« (290) and to make them realize that comics are a rewarding subject of literary and cultural studies, partly because of the wide-ranging reception and pop-cultural influence (1–2; 290), but mostly because they
are »an art form that has an incredibly rich potential« in story-telling (290, cf. 9). Not only does this ambition seem to be a bit outdated, given the prolific output in the field over the past fifteen years, it also seems unnecessary with regard to the targeted audience of this book.

Indeed, Boschenhoff is right to point out that more systematic narratological studies have been a lacuna of research on graphic fiction. This assessment accounts for the prolific output over the last decade, most recently the collection of Stein/Thon, presumably published too late for Boschenhoff to reference it.1 However, central texts such as Wie Comics erzählen (Martin Schüwer) do not offer, Boschenhoff writes, an appropriate framework because they make »hardly any reference to narratological concepts and where they are mentioned their treatment remains cursory« (13). This is a comment on Schüwer’s 500-page study, which is concerned with »movement, space, time and the relation between pictures and texts [...]« (3, cf. 71). Apart from the fact that Boschenhoff’s own categories (time, space, pictures and story-telling, etc.) do not significantly diverge from his, this assessment neither does Schüwer’s study justice nor explains why her own arguments fall short of state of the art research, as studies explicitly concerned with single narratological categories such as focalization (cf. e.g. Horstkotte/Pedri2) are not discussed in the relevant chapters (cf. »Focalisation« 194–249).

Nonetheless, this book certainly has a unique intermedial focus. The author wants to restrict her study to comic book adaptations of literary narratives to »circumscribe the necessary framework for comic adaptations of prose texts« (71). It is not made clear what this means exactly, but the methodological decision is convincing: in comparing the »original« text with the »adaptation« (synonym in this text to »translation« and »transmediation«), the differences in the representation of space, for example, shall be brought to the fore. Compelling in this regard is also the selection of case studies, as the author not only takes prose examples, but also plays (e.g. Macbeth, Hamlet) and poetry (The Rime of the Ancient Mariner).

Less compelling is the circularity of this approach and some counterintuitive assumptions connected to it. The argument seems to be at pains to explain the obvious: that comics are able to tell a story (cf. 5, 9, 15ff.), despite the author’s claim they are a »static« pictorial medium (15–32).

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1 Stein, Daniel and Jan-Noël Thon, From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels. Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative (Narratologia 37), Berlin e.a.: de Gruyter, 2013.

2 Horstkotte, Silke/Nancy Pedri, »Focalization in Graphic Narrative«, Narrative, 19:3 (fall 2011), 330–357.
Despite the alleged medial difficulty to »depict actions in time, sounds and emotions« (5), comics nonetheless »prove to be a powerful narrative format that possesses a complex narratological framework« (11). This common sense assumption comes full circle not only when it is said to be one of the conclusions of the book (cf. 290), but also when it is used to legitimize the application of tools from traditional narratology to analyze comics in the first place.

After the introductory remarks, chapter 2 is concerned with the theoretical premises on text-image relations, pictures and story-telling as well as important terminological and methodological decisions, such as the concept of »intermediality«. This chapter is at best highly repetitive of the introduction, at its worst it makes wrong assertions about several concepts from Bildwissenschaften and media history (cf. above all the central role of allegory in visual art, 9, 271–281, 289, but also the argument connected to the »invention of writing«, 15, or the quotation of texts from the 18th or 19th centuries to argue that texts like Lessing’s were »wrong« in assessing text-image-interrelations, especially with regard to comics, cf. 17–19).

In chapter 3, Boschenhoff wants to give a »true narratological analysis« (4) of a limited number of case studies which are nowhere listed at a glance. This study is indebted to traditional narratology with all its ahistorical, universalist and culture-insensitive implications. Additionally, her analyses remain descriptive throughout. Both these aspects are regrettable, because the comics used as case studies are most remarkable (and the illustrations and images are of an excellent quality), offering indeed a rich subject for literary and media studies. Instead, the author is literally repeating the dialogues of the comic which is printed as an illustration (cf. e.g. 11, 58, 99, 262), and for the most part renders only ekphrastically what is said and what is shown. The results are, thus, not systematic at all, but instead descriptions of singular and particular phenomena.

Most problematic, however, is the narratological expertise. The lack of an in-depth understanding is not only manifest in the references used (either limited in scope, in number or relevance, cf. 3–9, chapter 3), or the tables taken from introductions to narratives (cf. 158, 195), or the claims like »only recently did media such as film gain importance in the field« (despite the fact that the direct quote from Nuenning/Nuenning claims otherwise, cf. 70); this lack also becomes blatantly evident in statements like the following that operate below the levels of textbook introductions: »Language unfolds in time. Stories are told in language; thus, stories also unfold in time« (14). As might be expected, this study falls short of cutting edge research in the field, since the post-classical narratological approaches to graphic fiction offer most rewarding insight into the issues at stake.
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«.¹

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.