

The above-mentioned novels addressed in the book belong to speculative fiction, with most of them being science fiction novels. As suggested by the title, Flanagan draws a large number of examples from young adult literature with some of them proclaiming humanist, and many posthumanist, points of view. The author selects quotations from the analysed novels to argue for or against technology, sometimes even focusing on words and sentences in the quotation or the way a sentence is formulated. After the work is analysed, it is also contrasted with another work, or two or three works are compared.

Flanagan presents both the positive and negative sides of technology. Although it may seem at first that she keenly opposes every pessimistic thought related to it, she does have a few words to say about its negative sides.

In conclusion, this text answers several questions raised around the globe. The book contains much we need to know about young adults and character development in young adult narratives and technology, offering advice and truths about high tech through the perspective of posthumanism.

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Turtle Power!

Andrew Farago. 2014. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The Ultimate Visual History*. San Rafael, California: Insight editions. 192 pp. ISBN 978-1-60887-185-8

Richard Rosenbaum. 2014. *Raise Some Shell. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: ECW Press. 133 pp. ISBN 978-1-77041-179-1

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Despite their long-lasting popularity and surprising malleability, the pop culture phenomenon known as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (hereinafter TMNT) has been accorded little critical attention. With the exception of studies on children's/popular culture and/or television/movies/video games which dedicate a chapter or two to the "heroes in a half-shell" (e.g. Marsha Kinder's *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, 1993), academia has, for the most part, remained uninterested in the adventures and incarnations of Leonardo, Donatello, Michelangelo and Raphael. Hopefully, two recent publications – *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The Ultimate Visual History* by Andrew Farago, curator of the San Francisco Cartoon Art Museum, and *Raise Some Shell. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* by fiction editor at the Canadian magazine of underground arts and independent culture *Broken Pencil* Richard Rosenbaum – will spark a change in that particular trend.

The basic premise of the two books is more or less the same, as they both propose to provide an overview of the genesis and history, and discuss the social relevance, cultural impact and continuing popularity, of this globally successful transmedia franchise. The Turtles' "transformation from cult hit to cultural phenomenon" (Farago: 79) is traced from their humble beginnings as an independent black-and-white comic book created by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird (1984), through the incredible success of the 1987 animated series, as well as the more embarrassing chapters in the TMNT history such as the "Coming Out of Their Shells" tour (1990) and the notorious *Next Mutation* live-action series (1997),

to their most recent incarnation as a multi-million dollar CGI blockbuster (the Michael Bay-produced *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows* premieres in June 2016). However, the two publications go about accomplishing this goal in distinctly different ways. The large-format *Visual History* is – as expected – more encyclopaedic in the sense that it primarily provides information and fun facts about its subject matter, telling the story of the four reptilian martial artists in equal measure through words and images. In contrast, Rosenbaum’s slim, pocket-sized volume includes some measure of analysis, as it attempts to explain what it is about the “lean, green ninja team” that continues to resonate with audiences.

Described by one satisfied reader on Amazon.com as “a portable Ninja Turtles museum”, Farago’s *Visual History* is a veritable dream come true for TMNT fans. Filled to the brim with lavish photographs, drawings, movie stills, animation cells and comic book frames, the book also contains numerous surprises in the form of inserts (from leaflets and early character designs to the Mirage Studio business card and welcome letter to the official TMNT fan club), a poster of the book cover, and a reprint of the very first issue of the Eastman and Laird comic book. The text accompanying these visual treats is filled with gems in its own right, as it contains interviews with key figures from the TMNT history, such as Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, puppeteers and voice actors, and even the author of the (in)famous “Ninja Rap”, Vanilla Ice. Although he rarely rises beyond the mere presentation of information, Farago successfully combs through a variety of sources, weaving them together into a coherent and highly readable narrative of the 30-odd-year history of the Turtles.

The second entry in ECW Press’s Pop Classics series (launched in 2014 with Adam Nayman’s *It Doesn’t Suck: Showgirls*), *Raise Some Shell* delves deeper than *The Ultimate Visual History* as it contextualises the creation and success of the TMNT within the wider frame of comic book art in the late 1970s/early 1980s. Although he also provides plenty of information on the TMNT, Rosenbaum’s approach is more analytical as he proposes to explain how Eastman and Laird’s creation became “the most successful independent comic book ever”, gradually morphing into “a precedent-setting transmedia franchise never before seen in the annals of pop culture history” (x). As the ultimate hybrids, caught between West and East, human and non-human, the Turtles, Rosenbaum claims, are “the ideal heroes for the fragmented and hybridized times in which we lived and still live” (xiv). Quoting the works of Harold Bloom, Fredric Jameson, Henry Jenkins and Jean-François Lyotard, the author discusses the multifariously subversive nature of the Turtles, recognising in them the embodiment of (Western) postmodernity. The Turtles, Rosenbaum writes, are ultimate outsiders and “quintessential hybrids” (49), and their central thematic preoccupation with adaptation possibly accounts for the franchise’s endless adaptability to different media, time periods and audience preferences. Despite some occasional dabbling with scholarly prose, Rosenbaum’s style remains animated and conversational throughout, interspersed with very personal and often quite humorous comments (most of them featured in the footnotes), which makes for a volume that is at once factual and ludic.

Neither of the two volumes under review is a work of scholarship (although Rosenbaum seems to be leaning in that direction), nor is it trying to be. What they do offer, however, is an engaging, highly entertaining and stimulating read that is sure to

satisfy die-hard fans, but also intrigue those who did not grow up yelling “Cowabunga!”. Both Farago’s and Rosenbaum’s prose is informed by an extensive knowledge of their subject matter and fuelled by pure, unabashed adoration of all things Ninja Turtles. This is especially notable in Rosenbaum’s case, as he often veers off into what might be termed internet comment sections territory; for instance, he calls M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village* “total bullshit” (5, n. 4) and describes the (at that time still unreleased) 2012 Michael Bay-produced *Ninja Turtles* movie a “crime against God and man. And turtle” (112). However, the fan angle and passion for the subject that permeate every sentence only heightens the overall reading pleasure. Given their lack of academic pretension and mostly informal tone, both publications succeed best as resource books, ones that will hopefully be useful and interesting for fans and researchers alike.

Offering a wealth of information within relatively short, densely packed volumes, *The Ultimate Visual History* and *Raise Some Shell* are a most welcome addition to the sparse literature on the TMNT. Combined with Kevin Eastman’s *TMNT Artobiography* (2002; reprinted by IDW in 2013) and the documentary *Turtle Power: Definitive History of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (dir. Randall Lobb, 2014), the volumes under review present a satisfying and informative read and are sure to become a valuable reference for fans, but ideally also a springboard for future scholarly ventures into this virtually unexplored, yet highly stimulating field.

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Looking Back at the Spanish Civil War

Blanca Ana Roig Rechou and Veljka Ruzicka Kenfel, eds. 2014. *The Representations of the Spanish Civil War in European Children’s Literature (1975–2008)*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH. 303 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-62245-2

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This year’s observation of the 80th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) will once again thrust this often romanticised conflict into the international spotlight, and cause renewed self-reflection among Spaniards about its tragic legacy that continues to polarise their society. Therefore, the publication of the edited volume *The Representations of the Spanish Civil War in European Children’s Literature (1975–2008)* is particularly timely, especially since the subject deals with books and novels about Spain’s civil war directed to younger generations on the Iberian Peninsula, as well as internationally. Despite a number of strong chapters which convincingly show how literature for children and young adults is part of the cultural remembrance of the horrors of the Spanish war and its aftermath, the lack of a stronger editorial hand to ensure a high quality for all the contributions leaves readers with a volume that resembles a hastily assembled collection of conference papers rather than a tight-knit study guided by a precise research agenda.

As the editors mention in the first of two introductory chapters, this volume is in fact the result of a research project that was divided into two parts, one dealing with children’s literature about the war produced in Spain and the other with books published in other European countries. The format of the book follows this division into two sections (eight