Abstract
Since Alan Moore's *The Watchmen* (1987), the process of world building within fictional worlds seems to be openly represented in a large number of comics. Developed in highly complex games of inclusion and metalepsis (Genette, 2004) and far from being a repellent detachment set-up, this exposure of narrativity and fictionality represents a strong appeal for readers. Highly reflexive and metafictional comics have developed today into a wide practice of "metacomics" (Baurin, 2012) that shapes the stories, the graphic identity of characters or specific worlds, and the reading itself. It’s not only postmodern patterns that are at stake (irony, self-consciousness, fictional ontology, awareness among the superheroes, quotations, or hyper-referentiality), but the use of comics' visual discourses to build a graphic motionless way of world building. It will be necessary to examine this topic not only within the scope of comics, but in the relationship that comics have with other media (literary fictions, films and video games) within a culture of convergence (Jenkins, 2008), or of "maillage intermédial" (Gaudreault, 2008).

Keywords: Metafiction, Metalepsis, Reflexivity, *The Unwritten*, *Deadpool*, *City of Glass*

In his recent book *Cinéma, machine à mondes*, Alain Boillat develops a world-building approach to cinema stressing, especially in science-fiction, post-apocalyptic fictions or metacinema, the importance of worlds and world-building. The particular attraction and pleasure of this type of
films would be based upon the representations themselves of these plural worlds. The visual actualization and the conflicts in interpretation between those worlds would form the basis of their fiction rather than strictly narrative dynamics, plotting and characters (Boillat 2014). This last formula should be used cautiously, because it does not mean that there are no narrative, dramatic events nor action in movies like *The Matrix, Dark City, Pleasantville*, or *Truman Show*. There occurs a change in proportion in which worlds cease to be considered as the background for narrative actions and transformations. The mundane paradigm implies that this cinematic dimension of plotting and actions is drawn out of the presentation of worlds (at least two worlds: what Boillat calls “bimundane”), probing the ontological differences between them and, obviously, in the predominant dystopical and dysphorical structures of their narratives, dramatizing the mere conflict or antagonism between them. Commenting upon the two versions of *Total Recall* (Verhoeven 1990; Wiseman 2012), Boillat writes that the two movies “proceed from a similar procedure that makes the question of mundane organization the very object that the hero is seeking for” (Boillat 2014, 236). Conflicts or spectacular shifts of worlds can be presented as contextual non-problematical data — like the formal rule of a game or a constraint in poetics and fictionality — or, they can lead to a manner of inevitable reflexive process questioning the composition of worlds within fiction but also questioning the very image of the media itself considered as a building process.

The process of world building within fictional worlds has been widely thematized in comic books, since Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons’ *Watchmen* (1987), a famously reflexive piece of work. It is not only a matter of quality, singularity, and originality of the world invented and presented within one fiction: comics offer a vast wide range of properties, strange compositions of contexts, or stunning effects depending on the alternative realities that fictional worlds can expose, depending either on the imagination of the writer or on the graphic forms given by the artist. Comics often deal with the plurality of worlds through which characters, and particularly superheroes, are drawn to travel. They often narrate difficult, painful, or violent situations superheroes experience when they are launched in alternative and threatening spaces and worlds. In a diametrically opposed movement, they tell stories of invasions from outer or parallel worlds into a conventionalized fictional reality. But the word “world” covers a rather large variety of meanings, from determined technical uses (philosophy, mathematics, or physics) to sheer metaphorical acceptations. That term incorporates several different questions that contribute to the shaping of the imaginary contents of fictional
thematizations. Let us then quickly examine three examples of those uses in comic books: the shift of formulaic elements that produces a significant revisionist version of a famous character; a whole alternative universe or a clear reboot of the entire world of characters; and a sophisticated narrative thematization of the very idea of world making itself.

What if Superman had not landed in America but in the Soviet Union to become the superhero of the People’s Revolution? Would it, consequently, turn Lex Luthor into an American icon? Such uchronian revisionism of cultural imagination by means of its main hero constitutes the storyline of *Superman: Red Son* (Millar, Johnson, Plunkett, 2003). The graphic novel’s political allegory of the antagonism of worlds is here expressed through an ideological inversion of an iconic myth: graphic coherence and consistency of worlds (communist Russia and dystopian America) are attributed to the two antagonistic blocks that the comic depicts. By shifting imaginary values from one world to another, *Red Son* does not only deal with the ironic use of the most iconic American superhero of all, but the skillful overturn of its uchronian perspective aims at having the reader question the fictional set of values he holds and the forms of representations its own visual culture carries.

More radical in its approach than reboots or crossovers, the process in comic collections like *DC’s Alternate* or *Marvel’s Ultimate*, consists of creating elaborate alternate versions of worlds and to move well-established and favorite characters into completely new fictional surroundings. As is the case in Mike Mignola’s retro-futuristic steampunk *Batman by Gaslight* (1989), superheroes are then sent back in time, sometimes even without a causal explanation of any particular plot twist, like time machines for example, to rationalize their move in space, time, or dimension. They can simply be placed in some generic set of constraints, imaginary topics, or fictional conventions thus presented as “worlds”: in the Marvel Zombies comic book series, the home-grown superheroes, from Spider-Man to the Silver Surfer, Hulk or Iron Man, are turned into zombies after they have landed in what is described in the paratext as “a parallel earth”. Now superheroes are badly in need of food after they have eaten the whole world’s population in less than three hours (Kirkman & Philips 2006). Strongly distinct from or similar to their regular world, the second and parallel version therefore stands for the metaphor of fiction itself, and its figures will not only play on singularities or similitudes between the old original world and the new surprising one according to a more or less radical plot regime. The very means by which one accesses that world stands for an explicit and meaningful self-representation of fiction: gates, hazes, blurred surfaces, halos, slits, mazes, clouds, holes, pits, or any other graphic expression of
crossings, limits, and porosity. With its strong Lovecraftian intertextuality, the comic book series *Locke & Key* (Hill & Rodriguez, 2008) offers brilliant typological variations on such figures.

Another example of such an extension of thematized world building in contemporary comics can be found in *Black Science* (Remender, Scalera, & White, 2014), whose narrative concept rests upon constant and uncontrolled shifts, experienced by the characters, inside a potential infinity of worlds. In several layers of the Infiniverse — another exploitation of the fictional potential of the multiverse or pluriverse — the discontinuity of environments created by the science fiction storyline then emphasizes a dramatic continuity of the main character’s story. The main character is tortured by a personal drama in guilt, grief, and responsibility that carries on through the multiple layers of worlds, like in a self-reflexive science-fiction road movie running in a plurality of fictional worlds.

A vast display of nuanced and pertinent examples of worlds and specific thematizations of world building can be easily found in mainstream or independent comic book *corpora*, both being deeply nourished by genres that profusely supply imaginary worlds, like science fiction, superheroes, horror, or fantasy. But, as singular or autonomous as they may appear in their narratives, all those different thematizations open onto another level of representational and discursive effects. Representing two worlds within one fiction consequently leads to a reflexive surface on which the production of fiction itself and its relationship to reference are clearly symbolized and thus questioned. Such fictions inevitably draw attention to themselves by showing world building as a fictional and narrative process. It develops itself in highly complex games of inclusion and of crossing of borders between different types of worlds. Far from a repelling device, this exposure of narrativity and fictionality henceforth represents a strong appeal for readers. Highly reflexive and metafictional comics have today developed into a wider genre of *metacomics* that shapes the stories, the graphic identity of characters or specific worlds, and the act of reading itself. Not only are postmodern patterns at stake (irony, self-consciousness, fictional ontological awareness among the superheroes, quotations, or hyper-referentiality), but the use of comics’ visual discourses to develop a motionless graphic expression of world building.

About books, films, or comics, and even in the context of ludic and non-exclusively-narrative fiction such as in video games, it is common to name and to consider the contexts in which the actions of characters or gamers’ avatars take place as “worlds”. The time and space — but also topography, architecture, climate, history, the list of inhabitants according to various degrees of coherence, consistence or completeness, and, in some cases,
even languages — compose what theory and poetics call **diegesis**. But when watching movies like *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show*, or *TRON*, or when reading comics like *Wormwood*, *The Authority*, *Fables*, *Academy Umbrella*, or *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, readers quite pragmatically call the diegetical content of fiction a world. We particularly need to name it so when the fictional world represents in itself the co-existence of several different worlds. But the term “world” is not only used on that semantic level of utterances; it can also account for unusual communications between levels of contents that are distinct in our current experience.

The term “world” allows us to describe formal distinctions about the semiotics of the media, about the narrative process, and the conception of fiction as they are developed in the graphic and sequential composition of the comics. The diegetic properties of any particular world that were briefly listed above may seem both peculiar and specific: all the characteristics that help to shape fictional worlds belong to a highly reflexive and metageneric (Jameson 2007) pop culture. It is made of ironical pastiche, convergence of images, films, fictions. Pop culture can be keen on complex constructions and relies on erudite quotations taken from a rhizomatic culture, borrowing as much to fandom as to academic references. Whether they belong to the superhero genre or not, insofar as the scenarios of many comics in contemporary pop culture represent several worlds within the frame of their fiction, readers have become increasingly familiar with a type of narrative that thematizes **mundanity** (Boillat 2014), that is to say, the question of worlds in fiction (and not necessarily of fictions as worlds).

Since *Watchmen*, the reflexive tendencies in comics seem to have widely spread beyond the boundaries of authors and publishers of independent comics. Metacomics (Baurin 2012) are no exception in the current production of the comicdom. Therefore, comics do not only openly discuss their forms and contents, but they tend to assume that they henceforth deal with an explicit yet abstract and complex game. Such a reflexive game should not be taken as an axiological exception calling for higher forms of comic books; it consists, on the contrary, of a common basis of cultural motives largely appreciated by contemporary audiences. That mundane game in reflexivity is made of crossings of borders, presents alternative and parallel spaces and times and offers self-engendering layers of **metadiegesis**. That game develops itself on all the fictional potential of plurality of universes, exploiting the vertigos of the specular effects of inclusions, derived from Leibnitz’s monadology all the way to the pop recycling of contemporary physics. In that respect, the theory of the pluriverse is way easier to understand in Marvel and DC or in science fiction than in mathematical
formalizations. If one may find the string theory a little abstract, thanks to the final scene of *Interstellar*, we can now picture it quite clearly as a pluriverse accessible behind a bookshelf in the hero’s daughter’s bedroom. But when it is fictionality itself that self-consciously becomes the very topic of fiction, something different, such as the metaphorical use of the term “world” to indicate estrangement in space, time, or dimension is at stake: it is henceforth an ontological difference that is represented and an ontological frontier that is openly crossed.

Because fictions can thus be described as a succession of worlds built with their specificities, from a minimal mimetic gap to strongly autonomous and anti-mimetic universes, therefore, in a reflexive mode, fictional worlds can openly show the process of fiction and represent various auctorial conceptions and pragmatic relationships to fictions. When we are confronted with the representation of relationships within a fictional world that are antagonistic, or at least problematic, between one world considered as fictional and another that includes the former, then this type of narrative belongs to metafiction. In literature, cinema, or comics, each time the accessibility of these two worlds is a critical issue for the characters, and the crossing of such a border a possibility in his relationship to the worlds, then we are experiencing fiction through a metafictional perspective.

The term “metafiction” derives from the field of literary criticism and it describes at least two aspects of self-representations of fictional properties within novels. The first focuses on the question of fictionality itself, of its boundaries or frontiers between different topographies of fictional worlds or artefacts; for example, and to put it in Genette’s terms, “the world from which the story is told, and the world that is told in the story” (1972, 245). We need look no further than Borges’s *Fictions* to find clear examples of metafictional constructions and figures, possibilities, or scenarios. A second aspect implied by metafictional texts derives from this Borgesian origin: because of its expansion in contemporary fiction, metafiction stands for a body of historically determined works. From the 1970s to the generalization of its discourses in pop culture today — to put it bluntly, from John Barth to Stephen King’s *The Dark Half* and Fellini’s *Otto e Mezzo* to Wes Craven’s metahorror films — metafiction may appear as a protean genre. Consequently, metafiction is characterized by a certain set of generic forms, processes, and figures, as well as certain privileged types of narratives or plots (such as historiographic metafiction, travelogues, epistolary novels, anti-detective stories, or postmodern Gothic works). Such a description has been widely developed in the postmodern literary theory of the novel, using notions such as self-consciousness or reflexivity, irony and parody,

When describing fictional games in ontological confusion and the blurring of borders between categories, Genette refers to a famous passage by Borges in *Enquêtes*, in which the latter plays as far as possible with the paradoxical reflexivity of representation and its object, between the map and the territory, the reader and the character (1972, 176). As fascinating as Borges’s formula can appear, and even if Genette quotes him here in a pleasant manner, it refers to a fictional predicament by its very nature. We may rather prefer to listen to René Girard’s reminder: “worrying about the fact that reality and fiction may be muddled amounts to still being in fiction, to disregard that everything here IS fiction” (Girard 1976, 6).

Whatever its critical characterizations are, metafiction is still thought to stumble on logical and ontological frames rather than on a paradox: whether above or outside fiction, metafiction is still a fiction. It remains nothing more than a fiction, a fiction doubled, a duplicated figure of fiction revealing to the reader at least two worlds that are not supposed to come into contact or collide without the fictional erasure of the ontological frames that define their difference in status. Where else than in fiction could this blurring of frontiers be represented with their ontological consequences? Metafiction consists in turning such a possibility into a plot and in shaping series of worlds and their relationships according to it.

*The Unwritten* (Carey & Gross, 2009) does not only belong to metafictional texts because this comic develops a complex metaliterary game between several interwoven levels of narratives and fictions: in the context of the graphic novel, the game remains the same old reflexive discourse known as *mise en abyme* from paintings to theatre, from novels to movies. The metafictionality in *The Unwritten* derives from the fact that the frontier between an extrafictional world and an intra- (or meta-)fictional one is graphically materialized as a limit—a formal figure that is crossed. Thus, metafiction comes with the fact that the porosity of this limit helps shape the secondary world as essentially different from the first while remaining accessible: for instance, World War II Germany is represented in gray while the characters of the extradiegetic level are in color. Finally, the ontological and mundane differences need to find their own formal way to be expressed by the media: an image from the first level literally passing through another image of the second one, when the colored characters pass through the German soldier or the inn’s wall.

This example shows that the heterogeneity of space on which the metaliterary discourse of *The Unwritten* relies is not expressed through
an iconic heterogeneity of various media textures or forms, as it is the case in movies like Mary Poppins and Who Framed Roger Rabbit? Gross's drawings do not seek an expressive difference between levels of fiction and thus present, within the same frame, the agents of continuity (similar techniques in drawing) and the metafictional effect of discontinuity and heterogeneity. The colors and drawn figures of crossing both play the part of symbolizing the game on ontology and forms within the story. What forms can graphic discourse give to fiction, to its limit and to its porosity? Such semantics of colors is a specific visual means and can be used, for example, as an iconic operator of transmedia, partaking in the maillage intermédial (Gaudreault 2008) typical of contemporary fictional culture. Such a transmedial process makes comics a heterogenous cultural text pervaded by contents of other fictions, such as the transfictional dimension of intertextuality in steampunk fiction.

A highly reflexive comics like Deadpool abounds in transmedial and metafictional motives: after too planturous a meal, (Night of the Living Dead, Bunn & Rosanas, 2014) Deadpool wakes from a long nap to find himself in a gray zombiefied world that is a graphic version of George Romero's engendering of original fiction. From Max Brooks's survival techniques (The Zombie Survival Guide, 2003) to the patterns of 28 Days Later (Boyle, 2002), 30 Days of Night (Templesmith & Niles, 2003) or The Walking Dead (Kirkman, Moore & Adlard, 2003), the common topics of zombie fiction are reenacted in Deadpool's adventure. The convergence between cinematic and graphic fictions is determined here by an iconic and reflexive use of colors similar to a movie like Pleasantville. Even if the values of colors are simple to decipher, the use of fiction and the transmedial mode of metafiction they imply nonetheless rely on a certain abstraction in the way the reader can use that world.

It is not the technical quality of the drawing that is discussed here nor the virtuosity with which an artist has the ability to produce the highest degree of mimetic performance in the production of a world, no more than the strongly asserted idiosyncrasy of a particular graphic style. In that sense, stylization combined with an increasing figural autonomy, gained over a dominant narrative process, constitutes the very possibility of graphic metafictional discourses.

In stories in which metafiction problematizes inclusion and border crossings between fiction and the character's reality, formal simplicity or semantic explicitness works strongly interwoven with rather abstract notions that question the media and its fictionality. Their compatibility shows that, once more, the old cornerstone of axiomatics that long shaped the
reception of high and low cultures by opposing distanciation and emotional participation needs to be ceaselessly discussed questioned reconsidered. That is, not only in general and cultural terms but on a textual level, and particularly though analysis of the coherence and the homothety of forms and meaning in the comics themselves. That need for a close reading of process and figures avoids reducing the singularity of graphic style and visual answers to fictional literary or verbal metadiscourses. Consequently, it leads us to wonder what could be a specific graphic metafiction that would not be simple transposition, adaptation, or even transécriture (Gaudreault and Groensteen 1998) derived from another media form. Visual explicitness and abstraction make up the ground for figural emancipation and formal world autonomy. That opposition between explicitness and abstraction seems to work in quite a similar way as the one between critical distance — passed down from a now remote Brechtian heritage — and pathetic participation — today, in a more sophisticated fictional phrasing, what is called “immersion” (Schaeffer 1999, 179). Both dimensions are supposed to be contradictory when they are actually pairing together in contemporary pragmatic reception of intermedia pop culture.

Let us consider a critically renowned metafictional work, like Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1985), the first part of his *New York Trilogy*. In chapter 10, a character named Paul Auster asks Daniel Quinn, a former writer embedded under a false identity in a detective story that he fails to cope with, just before they part and in order to keep in touch: “Are you in the book?” This metaleptic pun sends the poor character back in the original world that he had left during that metafictional parenthesis. During that chapter, both the fictional writer (Quinn) and the metafictional one (Paul Auster, the Paul Auster within the book authored by Paul Auster—the one, according to the author’s own terms, that “is and isn't Paul Auster”) have discussed literature, reading and writing, and *Don Quixote* (the mother of all metafictions, way before Borges and Nabokov). The writer has shown off in front of Daniel, the amateur detective, his wonderful wife (Siri) and son (another Daniel): so many ways to openly represent the crossing of fictional boundaries. Figures offer representations of its metadiscourse to fiction: here the figure is a play on words, a figure of speech in ambiguity. In film, such constructions, surprises, and slips in narrative or discursive levels can be enacted just on with simple shot/reverse shot editing, for example. But what is the formal process through which comics or graphic novels can express the porousness of frontiers, the doubling of worlds within a world?

We need to take aside the various and common figures related to reflexive strategies or *mises en abyme*: the comic-within-the-comic, the artist’s
hands drawing landscapes and characters, jumping over the frames or the voice of the screenwriter commenting upon his creation through his characters’ ironic lines. What would be a graphic way to express the ironic question that the metacharacter (Auster) asks the Quinn — the character trapped within the boundaries of fiction and the opacity of his detective’s investigation — before sending him back to his own segregated ontological level? How can the comic’s language and structure figure this process of inclusion in its own formal ways?

In Karasik and Mazzucchelli’s graphic adaptation of Auster’s novel (2005), the pun is apparently lost or cast away, yet keeping it would have sounded perfectly suitable in the dialogue to keep it as a direct quotation from the novel, or even through some sort of symbolization of the fictional nature of Quinn confronted by his metafictional producer in writing. Having to choose between too literate a process and one that is too figurative, the graphic expression would lose the transécriture dynamics that allows the shift from one semiotic system to another. Here, the metafictional meeting of Auster and Quinn calls for a specific form addressing its figure to the graphic dimension of the media, and not only to the general category of fiction shared both by Auster’s novel and its adaptation as a comic. A figurative network spreads over several pages (78-89) exploring a proper graphic question about the engendering of writing and of fiction: the opening frame of page 88 is a hand holding a pen in a writing position on a white and empty background, the word “yes” appearing in a phylactery. The appearance of Auster opening the door of his flat, in the next frame, allows us to understand that the former is a close-up of Auster’s hand and pen, but seen from Quinn’s point of view. In a symmetrical effect, the last frame on the next right page again shows Auster’s hand, holding the same pen, but this time with his palm facing up. Set on a horizontal line of frames, the two panels proceed from a more visually associative effect rather than a syntactically coordinated one. “I’m a writer”, says the phylactery. The penultimate panel on the last strip of page 89 forms a diagonal line with the panel with Auster’s palm facing up, and it displays a typewriter on a similarly empty white background. The caption says: “Quinn told him the whole story”, written in the recognizable characters of a typewriter. Over the next ten pages, several panels regularly use blank white backgrounds, not necessarily because of close-ups or subjective focalizations. They work as stylized intensifications of the content over the context, they play the figure over the narrative, finding their own expressive way over the abundant verbal metadiscourse assumed by Auster in his Don Quixote’s lecture.
We cannot find any strict equivalent of the pun that would explicitly show the metafictional irony played on Quinn: the question “Are in you in the book?” provides a colloquial contraction of “phonebook”. But, as soon as Quinn has left Auster, he starts running down a very precisely drawn Brooklyn street until the angle moves to a view from below in the fourth panel, thereby erasing the setting to leave the frame blank and white again. The next panel presents the following caption: “He has been sent back so far before the beginning that it was worse than any end he could imagine.” Quinn runs across a larger panel, only a rather thick and short black line under his feet indicating the ground. Here, we find again this visual process of reduction to blankness in order to express reflexive motives: although the drawings may seem simple and bare, Karasik and Mazzucchelli’s work is extremely precise in the framing, in the play on the depicted settings and the abstracted ones, in the size and position of the panels in the strip, and in the use of single and double pages.

This example shows how the metafictional communication between worlds and ontological levels succeeds in finding a graphic form that expresses both the questions raised in Auster’s novel about books, fiction, authorship and readership, and their shift in specificity towards another media.

Metafiction is therefore not so much fiction squared as it is a representation of a fiction included within another fiction: in comics, going from one level to another is symbolized by visual and formal boundaries that characters have to cross. Surprise, scandal, breakthrough, incongruity, whatever metaphor one could pick to comment upon the meaning and the effect of that crossing, such an ontological transgression of limits rests upon a figure known in poetry, literature, and cinema, as *metalepsis* (Genette 1972 and 2004, Pier and Schaeffer 2005, Kukkonen and Klimek 2011). We do know for sure that comics are powerful *metaleptic machines* (Ryan 2004), challenging the boundaries between worlds in uncanny, frightening, or comic effects, and Genette more specifically evokes one of discordance or incongruity. But, when a figure is so widely spread in intermedial cultural texts, its effects and meanings end up being contrived, its disturbing potential is likely to have lost its edge and henceforth only consists of new formulaic patterns and neo-stereotypes in popular fictions (Mellier 2001). As rejoicing as the radical project of *Deadpool kills the Marvel Universe* may sound and as exciting as its prominent transfictionality and its whirlpool of references may appear, one might not find the metaleptic device of the last page up to the game. The comic book closes on a digest of reflexive conventions, from self-commentaries on their own enunciative engendering by the authors to
Deadpool’s direct address to the reader, half as an aside, half as what seems like a pose for the camera.

Again, metalepsis is a figurative mechanism based on simple and abstract impulses, two aspects that are not necessarily antagonistic or contradictory. Metalepsis is a spectacular and highly noticeable figure, whether the fiction wants to stress the violence of the crossing or the momentary confusion between worlds, but it is a claim for an anti-mimetic and more autonomous fictional construction of worlds. In this respect, by playing on the boundaries between worlds, metalepsis uses the Chinese box of its specular inclusions as well as the narrative possibilities to go back and forth between them, in a spectacularly attractive but sophisticated way. Metalepsis is often used in cinema theory as a way to challenge Hollywood’s realistic conventions, its genre categories, and the process of fictional immersion on which the power of its attraction is supposedly based. It appears that, in contemporary comics, metalepsis is so abundantly present as a trope as well as a plotting tool that it cannot any longer be considered as an infraction or a breaking of a given pact or generic convention in fiction or in narrative.

Do metacomics (Baurin 2012) imply a specific type of reading experience and a particular type of reader? Or have metacomics become the norm in contemporary transmedial and transfictional culture? If the postmodern reader is an ironic deconstructionist and a sampler, what, then, would the contemporary comics reader find as a consequence of his hyper- and transmedial consumption in his ability to straightforwardly play with highly autoreferential worlds? How does this reader use them when comics expose their fictionality and consequently redefine the standards of fictional belief and mimesis according various versions of worlds? As autonomous or autotelic a fictional world may be, it implies a formal, if not ontological, distinction at least with its outside (i.e. the world that is outside itself, the world from which this fictional world is read, seen, and enjoyed). The relationships between our actual world and any fictional world, as soon as they are thematized into a graphic form, materialize fiction as an inclusion. In that sense, graphic fiction always tends to work as a diagram or a figure of fictional and narrative relationships, shaping limits, offering its readers the objectification of boundaries. The superhero ethos relies upon a paradigmatic expression of conflicts, just as the mundane oppositions described by Boillat concerning his own cinematic corpus are based upon a dystopian paradigm: broadened to the status of a contemporary imaginary of metalepsis, the figure still persists in its depiction of dualities in comics, ceaselessly inventing possibilities to renew the formal, graphic, aesthetic, visual language of the media.
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