

“Media Convergence + Participatory Culture = De-fictionalization”

Vital to the study of text as a generative process is a two-part phenomenon: that of media convergence and participatory culture (cf. Henry Jenkins).

Consider the case of fictional character Richard Castle. Castle, played by Nathan Fillion, originates in the eponymous ABC crime dramedy, wherein he plays a writer who collaborates with the NYPD. The novels Castle writes (on the show) are what I call second-tier fictionals: they are fictional entities created by an already fictional character.

The media convergence manifests when we realize that we can purchase Castle’s novels on Amazon.com. Castle’s Amazon author’s page, the copyrights pages of “his” books, and even the entries for these books on WorldCat contain no indication whatsoever that the featured author is a fictional character.

I argue that the consumption of Castle’s novels is indicative of a shift from fiction to reality. The ontological border crossing is carried out by the convergence of three media: television, novel, and internet. When purchasing a Castle novel, one participates in the “ruse” of treating Castle as a non-fictional entity, blurring the ontological boundary.

Media convergence and participatory culture both promote and build on the generative process of a given text: the text generates further iterations of its narrative in various media, which converge and thereby construct a tentaculiferous fictional world. When audience participation is added to the mix, said fictional world often permeates the ontological border and crosses into reality, allowing us, among other things, to read a book written by a fictional character.