

## The Transmedial and Synontological Complexity of *Castle*

---

By speaking Klingon and Sindarin, playing Quidditch, and memorializing events such as Holmes' and Moriarty's altercation at Reichenbach Falls, we interact with originally fictional entities in our nonfictional reality. I designate such interactions synontological events, as they occur at the confluence of two ontological strata: that of fiction, and that of nonfiction.

This paper explores the transmedial and synontological complexity of a group of texts that stem from the televisual discourse of *Castle*. The character Richard Castle, played by Nathan Fillion, originates in the eponymous ABC crime dramedy. Castle is a writer who tags along a team of NYPD detectives, both drawing inspiration for his novels and helping the detectives solve cases with his mystery novelist's creativity and intuition. The novels Castle writes are what I call second-tier fictionals: they are fictional entities created by an already fictional character. How interesting, therefore, that one can purchase Castle's novels on Amazon.com and that the author of said novels is listed as Richard Castle. Judging from the sales of Castle's books on Amazon, we deduce that the best-selling fictional novelist is now a best-selling novelist in real life.

Richard Castle's Amazon author's page contains no indication whatsoever that the featured author is a fictional character. Amazon's authors' pages for Borges, Atwood, and Poe look, *mutatis mutandis*, the same. We can pursue our quest of discovering the identity of the non-fictional author of this second-tier fictional in the paratextual copyrights page, but to no avail. Wishing to see just how deep the enigma runs, we turn to union catalog WorldCat, wherein, while no author is listed, the "responsibility" for the *Nikki Heat* series is attributed to "Richard Castle." Mixing a fourth medium into this ontological conundrum, Castle now "collaborates" with non-fictional writers and illustrators to create the Derek Storm series of graphic novels. Amazon lists Castle as a co-author for these graphic novels.

In order to participate in this media convergence (cf. Henry Jenkins), the reader/audience is asked to "play along" with the stipulation that a fictional character created what he/she is reading. This, in turn, leads to the popular success of a multi-media franchise. In this paper I turn to narrative theory and cognitive studies to consider the effects and implications of synontology on televisual discourse. I maintain that it is specifically the stipulation of an ontological border crossing – wherein a fictional character is treated as non-fictional – that enables the popular success of the Richard Castle texts.