

Proposal for Individual Paper

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Bio

I received my Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from UMass Amherst in 2013, and am currently a Digital Instructor at FIU. My recently published chapters include “Charting the Extraordinary: Sentient and Synontological Spaces” in *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative* (ed. Robert T. Tally Jr., Palgrave Macmillan), and “Ontology and Superposition: Where the Muppets Meet and Do Not Meet Schrödinger’s Cat,” in *Jim Henson and Philosophy* (eds. Timothy M. Dale and Joseph F. Foy, Rowman & Littlefield). I am working on a book project about the connections among fictionality, ectostory interaction, and cognitive narratology.

Abstract

“Synontological Spaces”

As readers and text consumers, we have a propensity to interact with originally fictional entities as though they were real. Examples are myriad and multimedial: consider originally fictional entities such as Quidditch (no longer a fictional sport, as it is played on scores of college and university campuses) and Sindarin (no longer a fictional language now that it is spoken by non-fictional people). I call this ectostory interaction, as the interaction with the fictional entities takes place outside their stories. The space wherein we interact with originally fictional entities is synontological, in that it involves cognitive flexibility that allows a negotiation of two ontologies: the fictional and the non-fictional.

I focus on a particular grove within the vast forest of ectostory interaction: synontological spaces. In these spaces, entities that are originally fictional take up space in the non-fictional world. These manifest, for instance, via monuments: there is an engraved stone in Riverside, Iowa, that indicates the future birthplace of Captain James T. Kirk, and a plaque at Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland, which commemorates the vanquishing of Professor Moriarty by Sherlock

Holmes. In 2007 a dozen North American 7-Eleven stores were reborn as Kwik-E-Marts as part of the promotion of *The Simpsons Movie*, and in 2013 Google Maps unveiled a Google Street View of Hogwarts' Diagon Alley.

These instances entail actions that are simple: erecting monuments, remodeling stores, and digitally representing maps are straightforward undertakings. The implications, however, are complicated, because they involve synontological cartography. Cognitive flexibility explains how readers/audiences access multiple ontologies in ectostory interactions, and I suggest that the delight evoked by the quirky juxtaposition of fictional and actual is a positive experience of cognitive dissonance. Thus, I turn to cognitive narratology in my exploration of this fascinating and widespread phenomenon.