

## Proposal for Individual Paper

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Name: Rhona Trauvitch

Institutional affiliation: Florida International University

Email address: rhona.trauvitch@fiu.edu

### *Bio*

Rhona Trauvitch received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2013. She is an instructor at Florida International University, where she teaches courses in narrative theory, popular culture, and science fiction, among other subjects. She has contributed chapters to several edited collections, including *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and *Handbook of Popular Culture and Tourism* (forthcoming from Routledge). Her research interests span narratology, popular culture, speculative fiction, and literature and science. Her current book project examines readers' interactions with fictional entities and the social experience of narrative.

### *Abstract*

“Synontological Communicative Acts as Atypical Rhetoric”

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.

Synontological events comprise communicative acts: in playing an originally fictional sport or speaking an originally fictional language, one is communicating certain proclivities and social cues. These acts are examples of “fictive discourse” (Nielsen et al 62) that takes place not within generic fiction, but rather in the context of nonfictive, everyday discourse.

However, synontological communicative acts (SCAs) are uniquely positioned because they are devoid of several typical rhetorical accoutrements. In this study, I consider SCAs alongside the Ten Theses about Fictionality proposed by Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh (2015), show how SCAs complicate the notion of fictionality as rhetoric, and argue that this complication in fact highlights SCAs' quirky, singular nature. For example, senders of SCAs do not signal fictive

intent; there are no paratextual or metatextual indices, and no “foregrounded violations of the conventions of nonfictive discourse” (65). It is the very lack of such signaling – the act of interacting with a fictional entity *as though* it were real – that defines synontological events. Without these signals, how should the receiver make an “interpretive assumption about a sender’s communicative act” (66)?

SCAs stand out because they allow us to conceive of an atypical rhetoric of fictionality, and provide a new angle from which to examine the theoretical consequences of the rhetorical approach to fictionality.

#### Work Cited

Nielsen, Henrik Skov, Phelan, James, Walsh, Richard. “Ten Theses about Fictionality.” *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2015, pp. 61-73.