

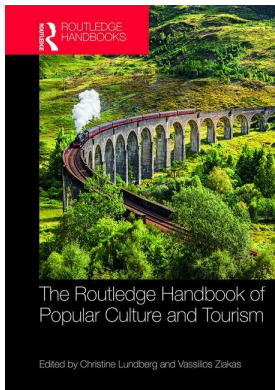
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3

SYNONTOLOGICAL SPACES

Rhona Trauvitch

Setting the scene: synontological spaces

As readers and text consumers, we have a propensity to actualize fiction. That is, we regularly interact with fictional entities as though they were non-fictional. Examples are myriad and multimodal: Quidditch is played on scores of college and university campuses and an annual world cup is organized by the International Quidditch Association (Williams, 2014); Wonka Bars are available for purchase in stores that are located outside of Roald Dahl's book's covers; Klingon and the Elvish language Sindarin are spoken by non-fictional people, and there are books about the grammar of Sindarin and Elvish vocabulary (Salo & Tolkien, 2004), as well as Klingon translations of *Hamlet* (Shakespeare et al., 2000) and the Bible. These are just a few instances of a phenomenon that has become widespread and commonplace.

When interacting with fictional entities in our non-fictional reality, we experience what I call synontology¹ – a convergence of ontological states. The prefix *syn* (with; together) denotes synchrony and combination. Synontology is characterized by the confluence of two ontological states: that which features the fictional entity, and that which features the fictional entity's non-fictional manifestation. Both ontological states are involved, for instance, when a player of Quidditch understands the nature of the game, as well as its [fictional] history. Readers² access synontology when they physically play a game of the originally fictional Quidditch, and draw on both ontological realms in order to comprehensively experience their interaction with fiction.

Here I focus on a particular grove within the vast forest of actualized fictions: locale-related entities that exist at ontological interstices, and thereby form synontological spaces. These entities are objects and events that are originally fictional, but now take up space and/or are commemorated in the non-fictional world. Synontological spaces manifest, for example, via monuments: there is an engraved stone in Riverside, Iowa, which indicates the future birthplace of *Star Trek's* Captain James T. Kirk, a plaque at Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland, which commemorates – in three languages – the altercation between Sherlock Holmes and Professor James Moriarty, and statues of Yoda in San Francisco, Rocky in Philadelphia, and – sometime in the near future – RoboCop in Detroit (Letzer, 2016). Locales also exist synontologically: In 2007, a dozen North American 7-Eleven stores were reborn as Kwik-E-Marts as part of the promotion of *The Simpsons Movie* (Garfield, 2007), and Nickelodeon Hotels & Resorts in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic, feature an above-sea villa that is a replica of SpongeBob

SquarePants' pineapple under the sea (Williams, 2016). Physical travel is not a prerequisite for finding such spaces where fictional entities and events are actualized. One need only find a particular police box on Earl's Court Road in London via Google Maps' Street View to click into Doctor Who's TARDIS (Kumparak, 2013). If one prefers the Batcave, one can explore it by Google mapping Bruce Wayne's residence (Renfro, 2016).

While the construction of synontological spaces involves actions that are simple – erecting plaques, building monuments, remodeling stores, and digitally representing locales are straightforward undertakings – the implications are complex, because they require reader interaction at the confluence of two ontological states. One ontological state is that of fiction. Readers become acquainted with a fictional entity by reading a narrative and getting to know the entity in its fictional setting: they watch the adventures of Captain Kirk on *Star Trek* and SpongeBob in *SpongeBob SquarePants*, they read about the mortal clash between Holmes and Moriarty in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Final Problem," they become familiar with the Springfield Kwik-E-Mart by watching *The Simpsons* episodes, and they learn about the capabilities of the TARDIS on *Doctor Who*.

The other ontological state is that of actuality. In the town of Riverside there is an actual stone that celebrates the future birth of a fictional character, at Punta Cana there is an actual villa called the Pineapple, at the Bernese Oberland region of Switzerland there is an actual plaque that commemorates a clash between fictional characters, across North America stood actual convenience stores called Kwik-E-Marts, and the TARDIS is presented as a locale on Google Maps' Street View.

That which occurs or resides in fiction takes up physical or virtual space in actuality, and the people visiting these synontological spaces therefore take part in a special sort of popular culture tourism.³ They are negotiating the fictional and the non-fictional in every visit, and delighting in the quiriness of the juxtaposition. In what follows, I will turn to narratology to discuss boundary crossing, cognitive studies to shed light on how and to what end synontology is experienced, and geocriticism to formulate this investigation in spatial terms.

We know that in practice, the entities discussed in this chapter are often installed, built, and programmed for reasons of marketing, promotion, and entertainment. The Kwik-E-Marts, for example, served the double purpose of promoting *The Simpsons Movie* as well the products visitors could buy in the stores (some of them originally fictional – and suddenly available for actual consumption – such as Buzz Cola, Squishees, and KrustyO's). The present exploration, however, concerns itself not with how or for what purpose these spaces come into being, but rather with the narratological and cognitive maneuverings that synontology entails, and the ways in which we may conceptualize it spatially.

Theoretical underpinnings: narratology, cognitive studies, geocriticism

Narratology

Our focus here is on synontology that exists outside the borders of a given narrative. In other words, we are examining synontology that occurs beyond the readers' experiences of a text. A reader's purchase of a Wonka Bar, for instance, takes place outside his/her experience of reading Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), since his/her purchase is not described in the novel. A reader's visit to the monument that commemorates the future birth of Captain Kirk takes place outside his/her experience of watching *Star Trek*, as this visit is not featured in any *Star Trek* episode or movie.

Synontology regularly occurs within narratives as well – through the process of metalepsis. In her introduction to *Metalepsis in Popular Culture* (2011), Karin Kukkonen notes,

“Metalepsis means literally ‘a jump across’ and, when it occurs in literature, film or other media, the boundaries of a fictional world are glanced, travelled or transported across” (p. 1). Characterizing a jump across narrative ontological levels, metalepsis illuminates the machinations of the confluence of ontological states. However, metalepsis provides us with a springboard rather than a framework for understanding synontology that occurs beyond the reading process. Metalepsis is necessarily a text-bound device, which involves a paradoxical situation that cannot occur in actuality. For example, a character in a book might address the reader, but the character will not hear or be impacted by the reader’s response. Moreover, fictional entities do not actually jump across into actuality, as what we see when we look at a Wonka Bar or do when we play Quidditch is a representation, copy, or reenactment of a fictional entity. If one were to re-paint in magenta a Kwik-E-Mart that exists in actuality, one would not whatsoever affect the walls of its fictional version, which continue to be orange in *The Simpsons* (S. Packard, personal communication, November 2015). Thus, while metalepsis and synontological spaces in actuality both pertain to the convergence or crossing of ontological states, they describe different negotiations of these states – one within the text and one beyond it.

Using metalepsis as a springboard, therefore, what can we learn, and what can we apply to synontological spaces in actuality? To best answer this, I suggest we consider ontological, rather than rhetorical metalepsis. Marie-Laure Ryan (2006, p. 207) explains the distinction between rhetorical and ontological metalepsis as follows:

Rhetorical metalepsis opens a small window that allows a quick glance across levels, but the window closes after a few sentences, and the operation ends up reasserting the existence of boundaries. This temporary breach of illusion does not threaten the basic structure of the narrative universe. In the rhetorical brand of metalepsis, the author may speak *about* her characters, presenting them as creations of her imagination . . . but she doesn’t speak *to* them, because they belong to another level of reality. [. . .]

Whereas rhetorical metalepsis maintains the levels . . . distinct from each other, ontological metalepsis opens a passage between levels that results in their interpenetration, or mutual contamination. [. . .] In a narrative work, ontological levels will become entangled when an existent belongs to two or more levels at the same time, or when an existent migrates from one level to the next, causing two separate environments to blend.

Ontological metalepsis are those that engender truly paradoxical situations – ones that cannot occur beyond the narrative. While it is fun to ponder the destabilization of logic that ontological metalepsis engender, the hinted implications of such destabilization can be quite unsettling. Understanding why the implications are unsettling will allow us to better characterize the cognitive processes that are at play in synontological spaces.

In *Postmodernist Fiction* (1994, p. 10), Brian McHale lists several typical postmodernist questions, among which are:

What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects.

In the chapter “Chinese-Box Worlds,” McHale notes, regarding the various types of recursive structures:

The consequence of all these disquieting puzzles and paradoxes is to foreground the ontological dimensions of the Chinese box of fiction. [. . .] Where a modernist text might pass over its recursive structures in silence, these postmodernist texts flaunt theirs. Our attention having thus been focused on recursiveness *for its own sake*, we begin, like Borges, to speculate: why stop the recursive operation of nesting worlds within worlds at any particular level of embedding? why stop at all, ever?

(1994, pp. 114–115)

McHale is referring to Jorge Luis Borges' famous hypothesis at the end of "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*," which runs as follows:

Why does it disturb us that the map be included in the map and the thousand and one nights in the book of the *Thousand and One Nights*? Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious.

(2007, p. 196)

In fact, in his essay in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, Keyvan Sarkhosh (2011, p. 90) notes that Gérard Genette "was the first to refer to [this conclusion by Borges] in the metaleptic context." Genette (1980, p. 236) writes the following:

All these games, by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude – a boundary *that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself*: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells. Whence the uneasiness Borges so well put his finger on: "Such inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers of spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious." The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic, and that the narrator and his narratees – you and I – perhaps belong to some narrative.

"The Man Who Created Woman" (1994), a short story by Svend Åge Madsen (in the course of which, incidentally, Borges is arguably evoked at least twice), perfectly captures this unsettling revelation. The primary narrator of this story conveys the terrifying claustrophobia of a book closing its covers around him:

Once more I felt her presence before I slowly closed the book and allowed her and her story to live on in her own world. For a time I thoughtfully contemplated the red book with the tattered binding into which she had disappeared. [. . .]

Suddenly I am overwhelmed by a terrible shock. For a brief moment it is as though I can feel the eyes which are reading me, the hand turning over the pages in my story. I feel like a little word in a narrative, feel the story encompassing me. Am I smiling, or am I shouting as I feel the pages pressing close upon me as my book is closed?

(p. 51)

McHale (1994, p. 115) notes yet another instance of this disquieting conjecture:

the fictional author in Barth's "Life-Story" . . . who is writing about an author who is writing about an author, and so on, also suspects – quite rightly – that he himself is a character in someone else's fictional text. But why stop there? If there is a *meta*-author occupying a *higher* level than his own, just as there is a hypodiegetic author occupying a level below his, then why not a meta-meta-author on a meta-meta-level, and so on, to infinity?

Not so distant from these examples is Kim Newman's observation in his introduction to Win Scott Eckert's first volume of *Crossovers* (2010). Regarding Eckert's compilation of myriad fictional and fictionalized characters into one crossover universe, Newman provides a rationale for *his own* inclusion, which involves his great-great uncle, mother, and paternal grandmother: "Through some skewed logic rising from these connections, I can now write myself into the crossover universe" (p. 9). The appearances of his name "in other people's novels . . . further cement [his] phantasmal other self" (p. 9). Newman concludes, "This may be an area of worthwhile future research, since – as Farmer's *Rivenworld* already proved – it means we all get to be inhabitants of the Land of Fiction eventually" (p. 9). The difference is that Newman's statement concerns the gathering of every entity into an eventual, fictional pan-cosmos, whereas Borges', Madsen's and Barth's are more ontologically spooky, implying that we might all be fictional to begin with. In each of these cases, however, we are presented with the ontological shift from actual to fictional.

In short, the above instances indicate that the permutation of narrative levels engenders ontological questioning because it raises the misgiving, What if *we* are fictional? As McHale proposes, recursive structures provide us with a vista to the next level – that of the real world. Otherwise put, they allow for the conceptual building of a staircase one level "up" from the diegesis (and, to repeat Genette's assertion, "the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic"). That there are levels *inside* the narrative propounds and even supports the existence of levels leading to the *outside* of the narrative as well.

That ontological metalepsis could contribute to spooky misgivings about our own ontological states may be instrumental in revealing why we are drawn to synontological spaces. If the "mutual contamination" of narrative levels steers us toward pondering our own possible fictionality, perhaps synontological spaces work in the opposite direction, and bring the fictional onto our ontological level; instead of our becoming fictional, the fictional takes on qualities of the non-fictional.

While this direction of [seeming] ontological transgression is less disquieting, it nonetheless retains the riveting scent of paradox. Synontological spaces are not paradoxical per se, and they do not involve any literal transgression, because nothing impossible takes place. However, the mind of a synontological space tourist is doing interesting things as he/she negotiates two ontological states. What happens in our minds that allows us to commemorate the occasion of a fictional birth – let alone one that is set in the future of our earthly, non-fictional timeline? With what mindset, and with which cognitive tools do we interact with fictional entities beyond our experience of reading about them? That we do so easily does not diminish the quirkiness of the situation; that we do so often indicates that there is something rewarding about this interaction. There is a fascinating cognitive puzzle here.

Cognitive studies

The cognitive underpinnings of synontology are flexibility and dissonance. Cognitive flexibility can explain how readers access multiple ontological states, and cognitive dissonance suggests that

perhaps the tension evoked by the whimsical juxtaposition of the fictional and the non-fictional is experienced positively.

In their discussion of learning and knowledge acquisition, Spiro and Jehng (1990) define cognitive flexibility as “the ability to spontaneously restructure one’s knowledge, in many ways, in adaptive response to radically changing situational demands” (p. 165). Cognitive flexibility is at play in synontological spaces, as one must almost simultaneously hold two ontological perspectives. Consider a Trekkie’s visit to the monument that commemorates the future birth of Captain Kirk, which is located in the town of Riverside. The Trekkie must indeed display something comparable to “the ability to spontaneously restructure [his/her] knowledge . . . in adaptive response to radically changing situational demands.” The situational demands are the demands made by fiction and the demands made by actuality. The demands do not so much rapidly change as they are merged and accessed simultaneously, but they are decidedly radically different. A reader approaches fiction with a mindset different from that with which he/she approaches non-fiction. For instance, when reading fiction one is typically ready to suspend one’s disbelief. One is more willing to accept outrageous concepts and flex one’s imagination. More fundamental, however, is the ability to *distinguish* fiction from non-fiction. This ability is central to the tourist’s enjoyment of synontology: if he/she were lacking this ability, he/she would be incapable of consciously and joyfully shunning it.

The touring Trekkie accesses two ontological states – that of being in and perceiving the actual, non-fictional monument (Figure 3.1), and that of experiencing the fictional world of Captain Kirk – and he/she does so via cognitive flexibility. The Trekkie is able to concurrently co-inhabit both realms in touring a synontological space by rapidly switching mindsets or accessing both at the same time.

Elen, Stahl, Bromme, and Clarebout (2011, p. 2) describe cognitive flexibility as,

the disposition to consider diverse context-specific information elements while deciding how to solve a problem or to execute a (learning) task in a variety of domains and to adapt one’s problem solving or task execution in case the context changes or new information becomes present. [. . .]

Given that context-specific information elements are taken into account, being cognitive flexible implies that one considers both the context and the information at hand.

Though Elen et al. (2011) are discussing cognitive flexibility in general terms and in reference to learning, problem solving, and task execution, we can apply their delineation to our purposes. In terms of synontological spaces, then, what is the information at hand, and what is the context? The information, to put it simply, is a given entity’s ontological status. The Trekkie possesses information that Captain Kirk is fictional, and that the monument commemorating Captain Kirk’s future birth is non-fictional – an actual stone that exists in an actual town. The context, on the other hand, is the synontological space itself, wherein the two ontological states are merged. The Trekkie operates within this context when he/she visits the monument.

Within the context of the synontological space, our information about one state must be reconciled with our information about the other state, and we appreciate the seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition. Essentially, the fictional must be conciliated with the non-fictional such that the two make sense contemporaneously and colocationally. Applying the definition provided by Elen et al. (2011) to our situation, we can determine that “being cognitive flexible implies that one considers both the synontological space (“context”) and a given entity’s ontological status (“information”) “at hand.” Tying this to Spiro and Jehng’s definition and repositioning it for our purposes, we



Figure 3.1 Future birthplace of Captain James T. Kirk Monument in Riverside, Iowa.

Source: photo by Nana L. Kirk.

can further determine that cognitive flexibility “is the ability to spontaneously” reconcile pieces of information (“restructure one’s knowledge”), “in many ways, in adaptive response to” seemingly incongruous (“radically changing”) juxtapositions (“situational demands”). Synontological tourists, it would appear, are quite cognitive flexible.

So far we have noted the abilities of synontological tourists, but what of their motivations? What does one gain from visiting an actual place inhabited – in fiction – by a fictional character, or making a pilgrimage to commemorate a future, fictional event? I suggest that we interact with fictional entities beyond the borders of the narrative because we would like to perpetuate our connection to the entities’ worlds. A good book does not have to end when we turn its back

cover; we do not have to leave the side of a treasured character when his/her story concludes. The Trekkie ostensibly visits the monument to prolong his/her experience with beloved stories and come into contact with the world of characters he/she holds dear. Unable to reproduce something akin to Woody Allen's Kugelmass' journey to the novel *Madame Bovary*, the Trekkie superimposes the fictional onto the actual and visits – in actuality – a locale mentioned in fiction.

Additionally, we interact with fictional entities in our non-fictional reality because we seek novelty, and are beguiled by the peculiar confluence of fiction and non-fiction. I suspect a somewhat similar sentiment is at play when we encounter oxymorons, and perhaps even synaesthesia. We delight in seeing how two things that should not work together *do*.

The synontological tourist enjoys the jarring sensation of paradox, and this is where cognitive dissonance comes into play. Leon Festinger developed cognitive dissonance theory, and based it on the premise that “the individual strives toward consistency within himself” (1962, p. 1). Supplanting “inconsistency” with “dissonance” and “consistency” with “consonance,” Festinger (1962, p. 3) described cognitive dissonance theory with two hypotheses:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information that would likely increase the dissonance.

Joel Cooper (2007, p. 2) writes that Festinger

made a very basic observation about the lives of human beings: we do not like inconsistency. It upsets us and it drives us to action to reduce our inconsistency. The greater the inconsistency we face, the more agitated we will be and the more motivated we will be to reduce it.

Cooper notes that “a pair of cognitions is inconsistent if one cognition follows from the obverse (opposite) of the other” (p. 6). Thus, “[i]f a person holds cognitions A and B such that A follows from the opposite of B, then A and B are dissonant” (p. 6).

I characterize what synontological tourists experience as cognitive dissonance because they indeed hold “cognitions A and B such that A follows from the opposite of B,” where “opposite” is broadly interpreted. For example,

- Let cognition A = the fact that you are visiting the site where Captain Kirk is to be born, and commemorating this future event.
- Let cognition B = the knowledge that Captain Kirk is a fictional character.

Cognition A follows from the converse of cognition B in that you would typically visit a site where something *non-fictional* happened and commemorate an *actual* event (moreover, one that occurred in the past). This is at odds with cognition B, according to which the event, like the character, is fictional. Given this formulation, any interaction with a fictional entity that takes place in our non-fictional world gives rise to cognitive dissonance. Of course, synontology does not usually produce the discomfort or vexation that Festinger and Cooper describe; even an accidental visitor to Google Street View's TARDIS is unlikely to feel distressed about this find. However, rather than indicating that synontological spaces do not involve cognitive dissonance, this actually suggests that cognitive dissonance – and inconsistency – are not always infelicitous. I am proposing that the contemporaneous and collocational confluence of ontological states gives rise to an inconsistency that is experienced *positively*.

Indeed, instead of striving to eliminate the inconsistency – their cognitive dissonance – visitors of synontological spaces actively seek it out. The tension produced by the curious juxtaposition of fiction and non-fiction is experienced favorably. The inconsistency is what makes it fun! Part – or perhaps most – of the thrill of shopping at Kwik-E-Mart emerges from the ability to purchase heretofore fictional products – something that, like a tourist suddenly finding him/herself in *The Simpsons*' Springfield, should not be possible. Instead of being avoided, this cognitive dissonance is sought, and cognitive flexibility sustains the delightful feeling of dissonance. In other words, happy synontological tourists are ones who have the flexibility to experience this dissonance.

Geocriticism

Since we are considering spaces – synontological or otherwise – it is also important to draw on geocriticism. How shall we map these synontological spaces – at least conceptually? How do we position synontological spaces with relation to typical spaces that are not conflated with fiction? It is true the Riverside monument, the Reichenbach Falls plaque, and the 12 Kwik-E-Marts exist/ed in physical space and that the TARDIS and Batcave exist in virtual space, but their essence is fundamentally different from that of objects whose meaning and history do not arise from fiction. Compare the statue of *Star War*'s Yoda with the statue of Mohandas K. Gandhi – both in San Francisco, California. Both statues exist in actuality, and both commemorate figures. Yet comprehending and appreciating each statue calls on different cognitive processes. Can this difference be expressed cartographically?

To explore these notions of differently conceptualized spaces, let us distinguish among categories of synontological space. There are various types of synontological space, which can be grouped into five broad categories:

1. A non-fictional locale that is described in fiction is used to commemorate a fictional event (e.g. Riverside, Iowa; Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland).
2. A non-fictional locale is repurposed to function as a place described in fiction (e.g. Kwik-E-Mart from *The Simpsons*, the pineapple from *SpongeBob SquarePants*).
3. A fictional locale is recreated in a non-fictional physical space (e.g. Warner Bros. Studio's Diagon Alley).
4. A fictional locale is recreated in non-fictional virtual space (e.g. Batman's Batcave; Doctor Who's TARDIS).
5. A fictional object is overlaid on a non-fictional space, as in augmented reality (e.g. *Pokémon Go*).

While spaces in categories 1, 2, and 3 exist on a physical terrain, spaces in categories 4 and 5 exist in virtual space. Spaces in all categories can be represented on a map, and in all cases we interact with fictional entities in non-fictional space.

Synontology does not affect the non-fictional space itself; it does not change the actual space in some fundamental manner. What changes is our perception of that space, now that it has been tinted not only by its entanglement with our imaginations, but also, crucially, by a marvelous ontological juxtaposition. In the Translator's Preface to Bertrand Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011, p. x), Robert T. Tally Jr. notes,

a *place* is only a place because of the ways in which we, individually and collectively, organize space in such a way as to mark the topos as special, to set it apart from the spaces

surrounding and infusing it. Our understanding of a particular place is determined by our personal experiences with it, but also by our reading about others' experiences, by our point of view, including our biases and our wishful thinking.

Any place can be imbued with meaning because of events that go on there. The big tree by the town library may be meaningful to one who, as a child, used it as a meeting place before setting off on adventures with friends. A synontological topos is different: it is unusually special in that it is set apart from other topoi by the ontological confluence that characterizes it.

One way to represent this topos is as a kind of palimpsest, where one ontological stratum is overlaid with another ontological stratum (or, in terms of cognitions A and B as above, one cognitive stratum is overlaid with another cognitive stratum) – both strata visible. This can be directly visually represented in synontological spaces that belong in category 5, where non-fictional space is overlaid with fictional objects, as in augmented reality.

While the palimpsest can be a useful approximation in terms of a representational structure, it does not capture the confluence that is the core of synontology. A better cartographic representation might rely on color, as when two colors are mixed to yield a third. One ontological space is thought of as red, the other ontological space is thought of as blue, and when mixed they produce purple – the synontological space. This conceptualization lacks [dimensional] structure, but it evokes conflux rather than overlay.

Navigating a fused space might conceivably call on a kind of combination of the cognitive processes used in each of the spaces in question. For instance, when in a purple, synontological space, visitors would draw on the blue cognitive process that pertains to the ontological state of fiction, and the red cognitive process that pertains to the ontological state of non-fiction. Cognitive flexibility and cognitive dissonance might be considered “purple cognitive processes,” as they take into account at least two mental states.

Implications for popular culture tourism

The implications for popular culture tourism are theoretical rather than practical: this chapter does not propose changes to tourists' adventures of visiting or witnessing synontological spaces, but it does shed light on how these spaces are conceived, how they become viable, and how narratology, cognitive studies, and geocriticism come to bear on this type of experience. Understanding the multi-framework underpinnings of this phenomenon affords us a more comprehensive view of the popular culture tourism field.

Just as interesting as what is going on in the tourist's mind during a visit to a synontological space are the implications of such a visit for social behavior. Synontology that results from a reader's interaction with a fictional entity beyond the text wherein that entity originates requires action that is more often than not social in nature. One must behave socially in order to play Quidditch and speak Klingon. A visitor of Riverside – even if alone – is behaving socially because commemorating and celebrating famous fictional events immediately includes the visitor in communities of active fans. Synontology constitutes not only significant leaps in empathy, imagination, and abstract reasoning, but also a more public form of engagement.

Becoming absorbed in a good book or film, we are not content with merely transporting ourselves into its fiction. We take an additional step and interact with the fiction, going in the other direction and bringing it into our non-fictional world (invariably constricting it with the rules and conventions of reality), prolonging our enjoyment with pretend play. In actualizing fiction in experiences such as popular culture tourism, we re-access narrative in a markedly social way.⁴

Notes

- 1 The terms *synonty*, *synontology*, and variations thereof have been previously utilized in several fields. In *Whitehead's Ontology* (1972), John Lango uses *synonty* and *synontic* to discuss relations between entities. *Synontology* and *synontologie* are used in theology (e.g. ISPCK, 2001; Vagneux, 2015), sociology (e.g. Hermann, 2015), botany (e.g. Löschner et al., 1863), and conchology (e.g. Tryon, 1867) to denote various forms of coexistence. I am employing *synontology* here in a new context in order to express the convergence of ontological states.
- 2 I use *readers* to denote consumers of narratives in any medium, including that of book, moving image, etc. Similarly, when I write *texts*, I refer to the make-up of narrative in any medium.
- 3 I use the terms *tourist* and *visitor* broadly, to encompass those who access spaces via maps as well.
- 4 I dedicate this essay to my grandparents, Yona and Michael Traubici, and to the memory of my grand-aunt, Silvia "Coca" Landesberg. Their love, kindness, and warmth encourage me to pursue these journeys among fantastic locales.

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