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CROSSOVER FRAMEWORK:  
FEATURES, POSSIBILITIES AND RAMIFICATIONS  
OF FICTIONAL CROSSOVER NARRATIVES

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Crossover Framework:  
Features, Possibilities and Ramifications of Fictional Crossover Narratives

Crossover Kuramı:  
Kurgusal Crossover Anlatıların Özellikleri, Olasılıkları ve Sonuçları

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## ABSTRACT

Fictional crossovers, narratives in which entities (such as characters) of a fictional text transfictionally appear in another distinct such work, have become frequently executed acts in contemporary storytelling. Regardless of their prominence in the popular culture, crossovers remained understudied and untheorized in the academical literature; a situation which causes vagueness regarding the definition and the exact nature of the notion while the possibilities and consequences of such narratives have also remained mostly unexplored as a result.

The purpose of this work is to remedy these problems by producing a framework to define and theorize narrative crossovers. To clarify the definition of the notion, the produced framework proposes a normative set of qualification criteria that a work must meet in order to be defined as a crossover, while providing alternative terminology (with explanatory differentiation) for works that are categorically similar yet different in narrative nature; effectively narrow defining crossovers.

In addition, to address the question of narrative possibility; the Crossover Framework produces a dedicated model for the assessment of crossover compatibility between respective works of fiction through making an adaptation of the Possible Worlds Theory. And finally, the produced framework presents the original elaborate theorization of the narrative and ontological ramifications of a crossover for the texts and their residing fictional realities that are involved in it, listing five consequences that a narrative of this kind can result in.

The Crossover Framework is the first elaborate dedicated study and the maiden theorization effort of this delicate way of transfictional storytelling and seeks to ensure that crossovers take their rightful place in the literature of narrative studies.

**Keywords:** Crossovers, Transfictionality, Fictional Reality, Narrative, Possible Worlds

## ÖZET

Crossover olarak adlandırılan, bir kurgusal metne ait (karakter gibi) öğelerin farklı bir eserde bulunmasını içeren anlatılar, çağdaş hikaye anlatımı sanatında sık karşılaşılır hale gelmiştir. Popüler kültürün ön planında sahip oldukları bu konuma rağmen crossoverlar hakkında akademik olarak yeterince çalışılmamış, bu olgu hakkında bir teori ortaya konulmamıştır. Bu durum, crossover olgusunun tanımının yapılmasında ve doğasının tam olarak anlaşılmasında belirsizliğe yol açmaktadır. Ayrıca bu tür anlatıların kurgulanması ile ilgili olasılıklar ve doğurdıkları sonuçlar da büyük oranda incelenmemiştir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bu eksiklikleri gidermek adına crossover anlatıları tanımlayacak bir çerçeve oluşturmak ve bu sırada teorisini geliştirmektir. Olgunun kesin bir şekilde tanımlanması amacıyla bu çalışma; bir kurgusal anlatının, crossover olarak tanımlanabilmesi için sağlaması gereken bir grup normatif yeterlilik kriteri ortaya koymakta ve kategorik olarak benzer ancak anlatısal açıdan farklı eserler için ise (farklılıkların açıklaması ile birlikte) alternatif terminoloji önermektedir.

Ayrıca bu çalışma, anlatısal olasılıkları aydınlatmak amacıyla; Olası Dünyalar Teorisinin bir uyarlamasını yaparak kurgusal eserlerin birbirleriyle crossover yapmak için uygun olup, olmadığını belirleyebilecek bir model üretmektedir. Ve son olarak, bir crossover anlatısının; hikayesine dahil olan metinler ve bunların kurgusal gerçeklikleri üzerindeki anlatısal ve ontolojik etkilerini teorize etmekte, bu tür bir anlatının beş muhtemel sonucunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Crossover Kuramı, kurgunun metinlerarası işleyişiyle ilgili bu nadide anlatı yönteminin teorisini ortaya koymak adına ilk kapsamlı çalışma olarak, crossoverların anlatı bilimi literatüründeki haklı yerini almasını sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Crossover, Metinlerarası Kurgu, Kurgusal Gerçeklik, Anlatı, Olası Dünyalar

## INTRODUCTION

First, a prologue;

In 2007, Las Vegas entomologist crime scene investigator Gil Grissom and New York City missing person squad special agent Jack Malone teamed up to apprehend a serial killer in a two episode crossover story between the TV series CSI and Without a Trace with the narrative of the story starting in an episode of the former and concluding in the latter respectively. For the viewers of either show, it was an interesting opportunity to see the two detectives, the characters and expertises of whom are considerably different than one another, at work together, in cooperation, dealing with the case at hand, as well as with each other. In the general sense, it was a few hours of content, presenting entertainment for the viewers while generating revenue for the producers. In the general sense, the specific story at hand started when it started and ended when it ended. However there is much more to it, if one is to investigate deeper, as Grissom and Malone would do.

Such a crossover did not just end up bringing together two random characters for additional entertainment, it has brought together two fictional realities. The TV series CSI (not including its sister series) had a 15 season run between the years 2000 and 2015 adding up to a total of 337 episodes while the 7 season run of Without a Trace totals up to 160 episodes. This means years worth of stories, events and intercharacter relationships adding up to two considerably sized fictional realities, each with their own canon, respective individualities of which morphed into a collective entity the moment Grissom and Malone entered the same scene. Reality is a rather binding contract, bindingness of which decreases among a spectrum stretching from actual to fictional. While there is very little area of flexibility, if any, in the reality of the actual, a sizable area remains within that of the fictional regarding the level of

bindingness. The flexibility within this area seems to be dependent on the powers that be that set the amount of it. It can be strict in the sense that the fictional reality functions as close to its actual counterpart as it can, resulting in the notion that with the coexistence of Grissom and Malone, the respective realities of their original series are forever merged with one another, becoming responsible for the realities of each other from that moment on (if not retrospectively), just as that, the amount flexibility can be considerably loose, resulting in the limitation of the fictional reality of the crossover in that of its own and/or might remain reckless about its reality altogether.

There are many examples of crossovers in the history of fiction, on various media, that acted strict or loose regarding this notion, but then the question arises; How can it go either way? Or why does it go either way? And perhaps, should it go in one of those ways? The coming chapters of this work will investigate the delicate narrative act that is the fictional crossover.

With that in place, let's get to the main introduction;

Storytelling is a peculiar thing. While it is a function of almost all arts, there is even the argument that it is an art in itself. McWilliams (1998) shows the act of storytelling as a fine and beautiful art and reminds the ability of a well presented story to cut across all barriers such as age and culture while further stressing the power of a great story to be remembered long after the act of its retelling. Shepard (1988) also sees storytelling as its own art form and argues it to be one of the oldest devices of communicating. A statement, Witkowski (2020) also agrees and supports by arguing that it is the narrative that gives experience its meaning. Storytelling, if done well, can take people through wild journeys into adventures, realms and enable glimpses into realities that are different than ours. Narratives of fiction desire this; to do good storytelling, to achieve this notion of taking their audience beyond that line which separates the actual from the fictional by immersing them with the intensity of their narratives, thus presenting the reality of their fiction for as long as the act of narration

continues before the audience return to their actuality.

Abbott (2002) describes a story as a sequence of events and a narrative as how this story is represented, states that narrative is a narrator's recounting of past events to a narratee. The narrator here of course does not specifically need to be a person, it can be the entire presentation by the medium in question as a narrative is packed in the form that can be relayed through it. So apparently, it takes a well executed narrative to immerse its audience into the story it narrates and like all arts, crafts and tricks, narrative has features, methods and semantics that set, allow and limit the capabilities of it. The formal study of narrative is called narratology (Ryan & Thon 2014) which busies itself and its scholars with the academic and practical inquiry of various kinds of narratives including the narratives of fiction which this work will concern itself with. Fictional narratives, by structure and virtue is no easy subject to study. It is a field of considerable depth with its subject of interest having hundreds of years of history and practice. Fortunately, narratology is not alone in this inquiry as it feeds from and builds upon a number of intellectual, academic and artistic pillars that it stands upon, such as literary theory and criticism (as literature is the birth place of fictional narratives), art studies (as narratives of many kinds are found within many forms or art), philosophy (as reality, whether it be actual or fictional, always remains a curious concept), psychology (as its audience is, after all, people) and communication studies (as in current state of global affairs, fictional narratives tend to reach their audiences through the use of mass media and furthermore, simply, storytelling in its core is a pure form of communication).

The combined efforts of the forementioned academic and artistic fields have resulted in an extensive academic literature and practitioner methodology, yet the subject of interest at hand always, to a degree, maintains its mysterious complexity. After all, fictional narratives are works of art and what is art if without some immeasurable subjectivity. Art indeed is subjective. Especially the process of its evaluation, in which a host of contextual factors compete with each other, sometimes

even to the point of taking the focus away from the object itself (Smith 2016). Among such contextual factors, important variables such as culture cause different evaluations by different audiences and scholars alike, which further adds to the subjective state of art and according to Smith and Newman (2014), complicates the situation, as well as making it difficult, if not impossible to replicate particular findings. This general situation regarding the subjectivity of art also of course manifests itself in its study and similar to the way that evaluations of art produce different results in different cultures, contexts and even individuals, different studies conducted by scholars and practitioners of equally diverse backgrounds and positions make it rather difficult in reaching easily generalizable and seamlessly universally accepted theories about art. A situation, Ryan and Thon (2014) jokingly refer by stating that narratologists hardly ever agree on a term. Regardless of these though, all the narrative semantics and literary, as well as philosophical theory that have been put to good use for the cause help us, enable us to understand narrative structure and its effectivity.

With all such complexities in mind, understandably; putting together an artistically beautiful, philosophically smooth and immersive narrative is no easy task, perhaps one that can even be a herculean one if the narrative is an especially lengthy and complicated one. Therefore, it should be sympathetic an idea that, if even a standalone narrative is a complex entity in itself, a fictional crossover story, which literally is the intersection of two or more separate fictional narratives, is a further peculiar thing entirely.

While this work will attempt at length to define and examine the act in detail in the coming chapters, the curious act that is a crossover can be very roughly explained as the appearance of characters and/or concepts of a specific work of fiction, in another discrete narrative fiction. Therefore, a crossover involves a combination of several independent narratives as the participating sides in its conduction. This means that a crossover, unlike a standalone narrative, does not and can not freely define and

dictate its own ontological set of rules which set the possibilities and impossibilities regarding its narrative, but is mostly shaped by the ontological rules of its participants. In this sense, a crossover has to account for the respective realities of all its participants. Every character (or similar entity), through their participation in a crossover story, bring with them their background reality. Which resonates in the fact that, unlike a standalone story, which asserts its facts from scratch, a crossover starts with a certain amount of facts and related reality brought into the story by its participants. In a crossover, fictional entities not only bring with them their own reality but also accept and conform into the reality of the text they are visiting, as their presence and all the dynamics occurring in this work of fiction which they are visiting are grounded and framed by the rules and reality of the hosting text, which for in philosophy, ontologically and in practice, for acceptable consistency, can not and should not contradict that of their own. This notion also opens the door for the argument that; as a result of causation, just as a crossover narrative is effected, even shaped by its participating parties' ontological rules and the presented fictional realities both of which precede the crossover, binding it; the fictional reality that a fictional crossover narrative presents should effect the fictional realities of the participating parties' future standalone narratives that succeed the events of the crossover.

Apart from their tendency of producing audience favourite stories due to their unique ability to bring together beloved characters and storylines, the narrative as well as philosophical traits and complexities that are mentioned above make it quite easy to argue that fictional crossovers are quite possibly the most curious and ontologically complex acts in the field of narrative science to study. It is perhaps because of this complexity or maybe for the delicate, sometimes varying nature in their executions that crossovers have not yet been adequately examined or studied and thus remain untheorized in academical literature. Meanwhile on the production side, varying narrative strategies have been employed in the execution of crossovers

in the industry, which in time resulted in the emergence of an intuitive feeling of the act, as well its effects on the involved narratives in both producers and audiences alike. However, while some traditions exist in the practitioner methodology regarding the execution of crossovers, similar to the situation in the academic literature, clear definitions, rules or an exhaustive study of the narrative and ontological ramifications of a crossover on the fictional realities, narratives that are involved in it is not currently available.

And this situation presents the goal of the quest that this work will undertake.

First and foremost, at this point in time, the concept of a crossover remains a vague entity in academic literature as an elaborate definition of the act is not currently available.

While there seems to be a general consensus in academical context regarding the general idea of a crossover being the appearance of characters and/or concepts of a specific work of fiction, appearing in another discrete work; there are different interpretations of this definition and the exact features a narrative must possess to qualify as a crossover remain mostly undefined. It is possible to find occasions in academic literature in which narratives such as the CSI-Without a Trace meet-up, works of fan fiction that bring various unrelated characters together and a Star Wars themed Monopoly set, all shown as examples to a crossover. While all three of these examples can be argued to carry, in some form, the outline of the general definition of a crossover mentioned before, it is highly obvious that these examples are of concepts much different than one another in many ways. For this reason, this work will argue that the situation in the current academical literature proves that a more clear cut definition and criteria of what constitutes as a crossover is indeed needed.



Therefore the most fundamental intention this work will be to present a framework which will provide a referable, detailed definition of the phenomena. It seems that what currently complicates the perception of crossovers in academical as well as artistic contexts is the lack of a criteria through which to judge whether a work can be called a crossover or not. For this reason, the produced framework will set a normative narrative criteria that a work must meet in order to be defined as a crossover while providing alternative terminology (with explanatory differentiation) that can be used to explain and label similar in shape yet different in nature kind of works that are often categorically mistaken as crossovers yet which do not meet the criteria.

A further concept that requires attention is the possibilities and impossibilities in the facilitation of crossovers between respective works of fiction. Fictional narratives can be of a wide spectrum of genres and settings, all with their own background traits and this alone presents some limitations as well as allowances on which other works a specific work of fiction can and can not crossover with without ontological and narrative complications. In order to theorize this narrative phenomena; the provided framework will make an adaptation of the Possible Worlds Theory to assess crossover compatibility between respective works of fiction.

Originally conceived by the philosophers of the analytic school such as Saul Kripke, David Lewis and Jaakko Hintikka; The Possible World Theory was meant to solve problems in formal semantics and truth conditions (Ryan 2013). While possible worlds semantics have deep roots and a long history in both philosophy and logic (Mutanen 2013), this modal logic theory was later adapted to fiction by David Lewis (see Lewis 1978) with further works by Thomas Pavel and Marie-Laure Ryan eventually further fine-tuning the theory for the study of narrative (see Pavel 1975 and Ryan 2013).

When applied to the study of fiction and narrative, the philosophical and logical principles of the mainline theory is used to test truth conditions and to explore narrative possibilities regarding a specific fiction. However, the Possible Worlds Theory also provides a promising mentality that can be adapted to be used in the evaluation of narrative possibilities and impossibilities between separate fictional texts. And accordingly, this framework's adaptation of the theory will utilize the Possible Worlds ideology and philosophy in order to produce an original model which can be utilized to assess narrative and ontological compatibility between fictional realities presented by respective texts.

While attempting to define exactly what a crossover is and is not, it will be of necessity to explore a number of components of a fictional narrative, both as what they are and thus for the part they play in a crossover, the most important of which being the concept of fictional reality. While an indispensable component of all fictional narratives, the concept of fictional reality functions in a heightened sense in a crossover, as unlike a standalone narrative in which a singular fictional reality resides, a crossover must account for those of all its participants, either by somehow managing their coexistence or by merging them into one.

Such a situation brings about various rather philosophical questions, regarding how (or whether) the occurrences in a crossover narrative effect the respective fictional realities of the participating sides. While there are ways it might and might not (while whether it should or should not is a case of its own, perhaps one that is even more important), how it does so (considering that it does) results in a great number of remarkable philosophical, artistic and narrative ramifications for the participating sides in a crossover, all of which most deserving of discussion, exploration and explanation.

As a result, the final goal of the provided framework is the theorization of the ramifications of a crossover for the fictional realities involved in it in narratological and philosophical contexts.

With all these at hand, the Crossover Framework that will arise from this work will define and explain the notion that is the fictional crossover while elaborating on its dynamics. It will set normative requirements a work must meet in order to be called a crossover and offer alternative labels (with explanation why) for works that are somewhat similar in appearance yet that do not satisfy these requirements. Additionally it will make an adaptation of the Possible Worlds Theory to produce a model that can be used to assess crossover compatibility between fictional texts and finally will theorize the ramifications of a crossover for the fictional realities involved in it.

It is my sincere desire as someone whose heart beats for both narrative arts and academic pursuits through my ongoing venture as a fiction author and academical background in literature and communication respectively; that my Crossover Framework enables crossovers to take the place they deserve in the academic literature through its original contributions, as well as being utilizable as a reference for the practical conduction of a fictional crossover narrative. I realize that a normative approach brings along a number of requirements and limitations as well as the possibilities it allows but I believe that such an approach will help better define a phenomena which at this point in time remains vaguely defined in the literature as well as helping to prevent a number of narrative controversies and problems that practitioners face in the conduction of crossover narratives in various media.

## **1. A GENERAL OUTLINE**

A convenient way to start this adventure would be to provide the general definition of what a fictional crossover is. The term crossover, the name of which comes from the literal act of crossing over of fictional entities from one work to another, is no stranger to the ears of contemporary audiences of popular culture. A great number of media consumers have most likely heard the term and most are more than likely to have enjoyed works of fiction, on various media that have executed the act. A crossover is what happens when in this week's episode of our favourite TV series, some characters from another known TV series appear and join in on the action as the plot unfolds, just like in the CSI-Without a Trace example. It is what happens when we are reading the comics of the superheroes that we have all come to love and suddenly; as the protagonists of the story realize that they need help dealing with the villain at hand, they make a call and to their help comes another superhero who is the protagonist of another comic series. An example for such an occasion can be the 2016 mini series Magic Bullets by Marvel, in which acclaimed heroes the Punisher and Dr. Strange team up against a supernatural kind of evil for an eight issue digital comic adventure that takes place in parallel to the respective titles of these heroes. While a visit to the past also shows us that, unknown to many, crossovers are not a product of contemporary popular culture, as they have been here a while. Crossovers are very much present in classical literature as it was frequent occasions for central characters from novels by authors such as Alexandre Dumas, Honore de Balzac and William Faulkner to make appearances as minor characters in the later works of the respective authors. Some researchers even argue that narratives similar to crossovers are found as far back as in works of Homer.

If we are to look at what is common in the examples mentioned above, we reach at the definition that has been mentioned in the introduction. That a crossover being the appearance of characters and/or concepts of a specific work of fiction in another discrete work and while the notion of a crossover is not limited to the inter-work appearance of one or more characters but can also include events, concepts, even objects, the most common manifestation of it usually occurs on character level as crossing over concepts or events are rarely as effective without the related character(s) to provide context. There are similar definitions for a crossover found in the current literature. Skolnick and Bloom (2006) define crossovers as cases in which characters, events or entities (that are thought to belong in different fictional worlds) do meet. Mulkerin (2020) describes TV series crossovers as occasions in which characters from two or more shows meet each other as a part of a heavily promoted narrative and similarly Proctor (2018) mentions the crossover of characters, events and locations from one text to another, breaching borders of their texts, going through walls that separate one sub-world from another.

When these definitions are taken into account, a crossover can be said to be very similar an entity to transfictionality. Ryan (2008, 2013) and Saint-Gelais (2005) define transfictionality as the migration of elements such as characters, plot, setting from one text to another, a description quoted and supported also by Deliu (2015) and Freeman (2016). Both concepts mention the movement of fictional entities between separate texts and indeed a crossover is tightly related to transfictionality. However, transfictionality is a more general notion and covers all occasions in which fictional reality transcends the text that originally presented it. A further definition by Marciniak (2015) about the impressive abilities of transfictionality regard it as a phenomena in which multiple texts (by the same or different authors) relate to the same fiction by reprising the same characters or continuing forgoing plot. In that case, transfictionality not only occurs in crossovers but often occurs in a more general sense as all sequels, prequels and spin-offs relate to the same fiction, carrying on the

original fictional reality by reprising characters, setting and moving forward the plot of the original text. Dolezel (1998) calls this expansion and argues it to be one of the three kinds of transfictional relationships that fictional worlds can be linked together with. Ryan (2008) agrees that such expansions extend the scope of the original storyworld by adding existents in it and Freeman (2016) supports this by mentioning that expansions such as prequels and sequels expand the time the narrative covers. Saint-Gelais (2005) also sees characters, locations and events, in two or more texts, sharing the same narrative space as transfictionality.

Therefore, transfictionality is, in other words; intertextual reality. When *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is followed up by the sequel novels of the series, we do not consider the continued presence of Harry, Ron and Hermione, among other characters and ongoing events as crossovers but as what Dolezel refers as the expansion of the fictional reality of the main text, with the sequel novels expanding the time that the narrative covers (more school years in Hogwarts, thus more adventures) and adding existents (new characters, creatures). Similarly when the beloved character Frasier from the hit TV series *Cheers* gets his own TV series simply named *Frasier*, we get the same notion, only this time from a spin-off instead. In both cases alike, continuation of plot through sequels (or a retroactive continuation through prequels) or a branching continuation of such through a spin-off continues the presented fictional reality of the original (and all preceding) text(s). But expansion is not the only way for transfictionality to occur and this is where crossovers come to play.

Going back to the *CSI-Without a Trace* crossover, when Jack Malone of *Without a Trace* appeared among Gil Grissom in the *CSI* episode that was the first part of the two-episode crossover, another kind of intertextual reality, thus transfictionality is at play. Malone is not there as a random character, he is not there as a new character either. Jack Malone in that scene of *CSI*, is the Jack Malone of *Without a Trace* with all his background, character traits, appearance and history, crossing over from the

main text (or TV series in this case to be precise) that continues to present the fictional reality within which he exists. Therefore this is no simple reprise of the role by actor Anthony LaPaglia. Jack Malone's presence brings into that scene and thus into the fictional reality presented by CSI, as a side effect or more as an ontological inevitability, the presented fictional reality of the entire narrative that is Without a Trace. Crossovers do not occur in vacuum and they would be meaningless if entities crossed over came only in name and appearance without what that name and appearance signify. What makes specific fictional characters, locations, objects and worlds meaningful and much beloved is not just what they are superficially but what the narratives of them have made them to be. For what is Batman without the childhood tragedy of Bruce Wayne, tutorage of Alfred Pennyworth and without a lifetime of vigilantism that resulted in a legend that criminals fear the most? For who is Gregor Samsa without his turmoil of confinement and deprivation? Or what is this place called Middle Earth without all the lore and the history of the land and the realms that occupy it? Just a man dressed like a bat, a giant insect and some rough terrain with a scary active volcano. No different than the way we humans love one another. We do not solely love the names or the appearances of those that we love, we love people for who they are. Quite similarly, it is the fictional realities that shaped these fictional entities that make them worthy. These entities are interwoven with those fictional realities. They exist with and through them. And when they crossover, they bring it with them. That is why Jack Malone can work with Gil Grissom, aid him in the task as they hunt a serial killer in the CSI-Without a Trace crossover. Because Jack Malone is after all, a special agent in Without a Trace. He knows how to do detective work, he has the knowledge and expertise needed to deal with a case like this and this is the situation because he is the man that have been presented as such (as a special agent, as a law enforcement professional) by the TV series Without a Trace and he has crossed over to CSI with his complete background. He is who he was in Without a Trace in CSI.

**Figure 1.1:** Gil Grissom (right) and Jack Malone (left) in the CSI-Without a Trace Crossover



Source: CSI Episode “Who & What “(2007), Without a Trace Episode “Where and Why” (2007).

Therefore we see that crossovers and the transfictionality that occurs through them do not just involve characters (or other such entities), they involve the intrusion of fictional reality from one text to another. So how does transfictionality account for the intertextual reality that occurs through an act of a crossover? Transfictionality type of expansion does not adequately cover such acts, as crossovers are not necessarily sequels, prequels or spin-offs. However, Dolezel (1998) also states two further kinds of transfictional relationships texts can have in-between them that can act as a linkage between discrete fictional worlds and lists them as displacement (also referred to as modification, see Ryan 2013) and transposition (also referred to as transportation), both of which are much more similar to what we see in examples of



crossovers. In Dolezel's work, displacement is described as taking setting/characters of a fictional world and writing them a new story, in doing so producing essentially different versions of their protoworlds (Ryan 2013), while transportation is described as moving plot/story elements (with their original design/mainstory preserved) to a different temporal/spatial setting. Both these acts are present in narratives that carry features of the general definition of crossovers, thus can be adapted to the phenomena; with the former often being the case in crossover-like speculative narratives and those produced in unofficial capacity, while the latter the case being in officially conducted crossovers.

Through all this, we see that, though they are separate entities, crossovers are highly related to the notion of transfictionality as a crossover is an act of transfictionality. And having seen that a crossover has more to do with the fictional realities that are involved in it, than perhaps even the characters that are involved; the matter then becomes about fictional reality and about how this concept affects and is effected by the act of a crossover.

Accordingly, with the next chapter, this work will start examining the concept of fictional reality.

## **2. FICTIONAL REALITY: THE HEART OF A FICTIONAL NARRATIVE**

Just like that of the actual, fiction has its own reality, similarity to the actual reality of which can vary considerably depending on the work of fiction at hand. All narratives of fiction present a fictional reality which serves as its foundation, the ontological fabric, which makes it the most important component of a fictional narrative. Technically speaking, the notion of fictional reality is even more important

than the characters, locations, objects, time and even the complete story (plot) of a fictional narrative as all these elements and entities do exist (in their fictional actuality) within the fictional reality they belong in.

This work will argue that the notion of fictional reality is comprised of two levels. These are the "Ontological Level" which is the residing relative reality in the context of the respective fiction and the "Perceptual Level" which is the illusion of reality experienced by the audience. Such a division in regards to the examination of fictional reality is in line with the philosophy of narratology which advocates for a discrimination between ontological and epistemological issues, with respective emphasis given both to the linguistic patterns and representation as well as to the existential mode of fictional entities (Zhang 2018). Culler (2001) also underlines the importance of such distinctions in the field of narratology as he states that narrative theory requires a distinction between the discourse (narration/presentation) and the story. With the support of the recognition of such a distinction in the field of narratology, this work will elaborate on the concept of fictional reality with the application of the mentioned division.

## **2.1 ONTOLOGICAL FICTIONAL REALITY**

Every work of fiction is considered to be real by its own standards. Works of fiction, provide their reality, the fictional reality, through their narratives. When a novel describes an event, it is considered real in the context of the story by the reader. The same is applicable for movies, TV series, animations or video games in all of which, related reality is presented through image and sound. The saying "a man is only as good as his word" is literally applicable to a work of fiction, the word of which become its reality. Inside a narrative, what the writer relates is considered true according to the laws of that world (Pu 2012). David Lewis (1978) argues that all

(fictional) stories are told-as-true about a world which is other than the real world and Ryan (2013) also points at the facts asserted by an author to be textual actuality. Zhang (2018) also supports this by stressing the function of a narrative in constructing reality. These all simply mean that fictional texts give us fictional information that is not considered to be fictional but actual from the perspective of these fictional realities.

A character of a fictional narrative continues his/her (to us) fictional life with no doubts of its actuality (unless the case at hand is a story with elements of metafiction). For as much as fictional characters are concerned, the information being relayed by the text, to the audience, is nothing but facts and truth of their existence. Gil Grissom continues to appear as a crime scene investigator, episode after episode in the CSI TV series for no different reason than a teacher keeps showing up at the school he/she works at in real life day after day. Simply because that is Grissom's actual job in a fictional reality. The same situation also helps explain Grissom's continued efforts in solving the fictional crimes that the CSI TV series presents. Because from Grissom's perspective, it is all real. Skolnick and Bloom (2006) discuss the question of what is and is not considered real according to the mental states of fictional characters and playfully remark that Batman would not risk life and limb to rescue Robin from various dangers if he did not believe that Robin was real and that actual harm could come to him within the fictional narrative (not fictional, nor a narrative to Batman) they are in. These come to show us that the information presented by the text provide a fictional reality bounding those within the narrative (characters, places, etc.) as an actuality. But, text presented information is not only considered to be actual by the fictional individuals but carries a certain overtone of actuality by the actual audiences as well.

All the fans of CSI know that Gil Grissom is an entomologist, which makes him an expert on insects and he uses his vast knowledge of these lovely tiny creatures while solving crimes in his job as a crime scene investigator. However, Grissom is not an

expert on hand-to-hand combat. Both his expertise in entomology and his non-violent approach to crime solving is again and again shown by the text that presented the fictional reality in which he exists. The audience of this text; CSI, know these qualities of Gil Grissom and thus, if one would dare tell a CSI fan that Grissom "wouldn't be able to distinguish a bee from a fly", he would be quickly corrected in this insultingly mistaken statement. Similarly, no fan of CSI would make the claim that Grissom can take on the Dark Knight in a fistfight. An example showing that the information presented by the text, having been accepted by the audience of that text as the actuality regarding the world of CSI. Textual statement as textual reality. Word as truth. The fictional reality.

A further point that deserves explanation is the tolerances fictional realities have on differing from that of the actual. David Lewis (1978) states that no proposition of a fictional text can be deemed unreal as fiction does construct its own reality which can and often does differ from the real world. Mutanen (2014) also similarly states that narratives are not truth telling but storytelling and that storytelling obeys a more complex logic than true/false pre-supposes, an argument that Cohn (2006) supports by reminding that fiction is a non-referential use of language. Indeed, fictional realities depicted in fictional narratives differ from the actual reality in ways both small and not so small. For example, in CSI TV series, certain scientific tests that Grissom and his team use in the investigation of evidence from crime scenes produce results almost instantly while in real life it might take hours, or even days for these tests to produce results. This is a rather small inaccuracy between the fictional reality presented by CSI and the actual reality, done so for convenience purposes as investigations that take months, if not years, are often fitted into 40 minutes in this TV series. However, fictional realities presented by narratives can be remarkably different from the actual as well. In his novel *The Hobbit*, J. R. R. Tolkien depicts a world in which there are races such as dwarves and elves, places like Erebor and a speaking, firebreathing dragon. Considerably different a scene than the one that we

are accustomed to living our lives in. However, neither the viewers of CSI reject the (fictional) reality the TV series presents because various scientific tests are able to be run faster than they actually would, nor dedicated readers of Tolkien reject the (fictional) reality of the Middle Earth because of the differences of its inhabitants and geography from that of our actuality. However different the presented fictional realities of these texts may be from actuality, their narratives set their own fictional realities and thus the word of the text becomes the applicable reality regarding the related fictional territory.

This notion applies to all entities depicted by fictional narratives. Fictional characters, events, settings, time and space, all of which that are shown to be medium free entities of narrative (Ryan, Thon 2014), receive their traits, features, backgrounds and appearances through the description and the telling of their tales by the narratives of which they belong. In direct relation, Pavel (1986) mentions the Meinongian treatment of fictional objects by proposing these to be non-actual but well-individuated entities existing in worlds different than ours. Similarly to how this notion operates in the context of characters and general ontology, it also applies to all entities of narratives, such as in the context of objects and places. Literature and fiction does not only individuate characters but often much beyond them through them. Information such as the cultural importance of the Arkenstone in *The Hobbit* or the geographical features of the planet Tatooine (like having two suns) in *Star Wars* franchise are again considered to be clear facts for these texts (as well as for their audiences) as within them, these information are clearly stated, thus accepted as a part of the indisputable fictional reality. Disputable only in case in which the given information is rejected and/or modified by other texts that relate to the same fictional reality.

A fictional reality not only includes and legitimizes the (fictional) existence of characters and other such entities but also serves as the ground on which the history of events that have taken place in that respective fictional reality stands. Just as Gil

Grissom, as a character, enjoys the relative reality of his existence in the fictional reality presented by CSI, so do the events that occur in the series. The various accomplishments and turmoil of Grissom's crime investigation career, his health problems regarding his hearing, as well as his peculiar romance with his colleague Sarah Sidle and his mentor-apprentice relationship with his understudy Nick Stokes are cemented in the history of the fictional reality of CSI as the plots and thus the narratives that have portrayed these events enjoy the protection and the patronage of the same relative reality in which all these are accepted as occurred. Ryan (2013) defines plot as the sequence of events that take place on a timeline in the narrative of a respective world, reality and further shows a folklore of backstories and legends as a static component of a narrative. In such a way, the events that occur in a narrative are equally bound by the residing fictional reality as the characters are. Through this dynamic; events that are accepted as occurred in regards to the relevant fictional reality form timelines which in turn constitute a canon of the respective fiction, a concept Parker (2013) describes as the accepted truths about a fiction that its related text(s) describes (more exploration of the concept to come later). Returning to the work of Skolnick and Bloom (2006) who have argued for the referral to the mental states of fictional characters to reach truth propositions regarding fiction, a similar notion thus can be referred to in order to reach in-fiction truth conditions regarding fictional events. Just as we, in the real world, do refer to our history to learn about and to validate our knowledge about the occurrences in our past; in fiction, the same dynamic applies by referring to the canon of the respective fictional reality. Because regarding a specific fictional reality, its canon is the history that is considered to have occurred. The memory of a fictional reality.

It must be noted however that the ontological challenge in maintaining the history, thus the canon of a fictional reality is the necessity of non-contradiction, thus the need for continuity. As by reason and ontology, reality (regardless of its fictionality) does not get to contradict itself. In direct connection, J. R. R. Tolkien had argued that a

reality of fiction could be achieved through inner consistency (Pu 2012, for elaborate discussion, see Tolkien 1947) as contradictory statements and events are problematic for fictional reality, especially for works that span through a lengthy timeline. Contradicting facts in narratives also prove problematic for the continuation of the story, as to be able to build upon the narrative, the facts of fictional reality must be firmly set so that further story can be built upon them, a further point underlining the importance of consistency in the aspect of the story.

With all these considered, it is then of no surprise that fictional realities, especially the more complicated ones, are heavy with history which is formed by a combination of backstory provided by the text as well as all the occurrences that have taken place in the narrative which do add up to the canon as the accepted history regarding that fictional reality. It is more than likely that a history scholar of the real world thus would feel right at his element is he took up the challenge to research the history of wars in the canon of Middle Earth, STAR WARS or Game of Thrones.

Therefore statements of the text, following and building upon one another depict and form the fictional reality that a narrative presents. So, through the information they relay, words of a text (or audiovisuality of other such media) depict a reality beyond the meanings of those words and signs. Ryan (1991) describes this dynamic as a semantic domain projected by the text and further states that speaking about the textual world, thus the fictional reality, is differentiating between the realm of language (which includes names, definitions, descriptions) and an extralinguistic realm (which includes characters and facts) which the contents of the former signify (Ryan 2003). Thus a narrative becomes a window through which its audience glimpses a (fictional) reality, different than their own.

This all comes to show that, on a philosophical and ontological level, a statement like "fiction is make believe and is simply not real" can not be made so easily and the situation is most certainly not as simple as that. While it is not the fictionality of a

fictional narrative that is of question here, it is that fictional reality, regardless of its fictionality is a presented form of reality and as stated in the prologue; reality is a rather binding contract. In a way, similar to actual reality, reality of fiction tends to be rather solid, tends to remember and is often unforgiving when the fabric of it is disturbed. Indeed, as a fictional reality is constructed by the text (or other respective medium) that narrates it, in addition to introducing, describing and developing fictional characters, geography and in doing so moving forward the plot, a narrative also introduces and cements the ontological laws of its becoming. These laws or rules per se, give the audience an idea, an intuitive feeling of what is possible and what is not in a respective fictional reality. For example immortality-like statuses is available in the literature fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien but not computers, magic is present in the Harry Potter novels yet not aliens and time travel is very much possible in the Back to the Future movies yet there are not dragons. Possibilities and the impossibilities like these are inherent in the laws and rules that a fictional reality explicitly or behind the curtain implicitly presents, which effectively grounds its narrative. And like in the real world, such rules and laws of fictional realities enable the audience to have a sense of what to and what not to expect as such a dynamic dictates what can and can not happen in the contexts of reason, logic and narrativity. Zhang (2018) refers this as the concrete nature of literary worlds. Treske and Özgün (2018) mention the setting of these kind of rules, which they claim to be almost as strict as those of physics, as enabling structure and modes of operation which then are used to sustain the conditions of a narrative. Similarly Ryan (2013) shows a respective set of natural laws as a static component of storyworlds.

The exploration of the notion above shows us that the fictional reality is the heart, the pure essence of fiction. It is the relative actuality that fictional worlds and their occupants enjoy independent of the consumption (reading, watching, playing, etc. depending on the medium), evaluation and appreciation by the audience as the ontological fictional reality exists regardless of its audience perception. This dynamic



works in a rather similar way to the famous philosophical question that asks whether a tree would really count as fallen if there is no one there to hear or see it fall. Just as reality occurs independent of its perception, fictional reality is formed as a narrative depicts it and exists ontologically, free from its audience perception. For example, the fictional reality that a fictional story depicts does not lose its validity if no one ever reads the story, it just then is never experienced by an audience. In a similar way, the varying audience perceptions and understandings of a narrative and its respective fictional reality does not change the fact that there is an textually privileged real and related facts of that fictional reality asserted by the narrative.

This notion also thus accounts for the ability of a text to depict and form a fictional reality regarding the fictional entities of that narrative through its narration. However, while the explained ontological level of the fictional reality exists as a standalone concrete construct possessing and thus presenting a relative reality of its own, narratives are meant to convey the sequences of fictional events, thus stories that take place in these fictional realities to audiences. Therefore it is also necessary to explore the dynamics that occur as audiences make sense of the fictional reality they are subjected to through a narrative.

## **2.2 PERCEPTIONAL FICTIONAL REALITY**

While the previous section explained how a text depicts and forms a fictional reality through its narrative, this section will explore further into how audiences comprehend and make sense of that fictional reality. A good start here would be to explore how the audience's glimpse into a reality different than their own is possible and how they are able to intuitively process this fictional reality presented by the narrative regardless of their knowledge of its fictionality.

While readers of a novel or viewers of a movie are well aware of the fictionality of the characters and events they are being subjected to, they still continue to read or watch the work at hand with the illusion of its reality. Coleridge (1817) named this the willing suspension of disbelief. A notion in which the audience (reader, viewer, gamer, etc. depending on medium) suspend their knowledge of the element of fiction present in the work in front of them to achieve what Coleridge, a poet himself, referred to as poetic faith. In relation, J.R.R. Tolkien argued that a fictional world, founded on universal principles of reason and logic in order to ensure a consistent, coherent and credible reality, could provide a secondary world to the readers, which could produce a secondary belief (Pu 2012). It is this notion that enables not only the immersion of audiences into fiction but also what enables them to experience and process a fictional reality, in a similar way to how they do the real one.

Suspension of disbelief not only concerns suspending the perception of the fictional nature of a narrative but also includes the act of overlooking the medium as well. An audience receive the narrative presentation of a fictional story through the relevant medium and through the textually or audiovisually presented information, construct their mental images of the narrative. Martin (2009) reminds that to enjoy a narrative, its audience also must be willing to suspend disbelief by overlooking the fact that they are reading the symbols of a written language or must be able to ignore that they are sitting in front of a screen or stage and by doing so making sense of the conveyed meaning by disregarding the medium. Sven Birkerts (quoted in Ryan 2003) also notes that while reading a novel, readers don't remember reading sentences, that they do not remember the language out of the dialogues, thus arguing that reading is conversion of codes into context of the story, through this very act.

It is again through suspension of disbelief that audiences become able to feel emotions such as joy, sadness, excitement or fear in correlation with the progression of a fictional work. Walton (1990) reminds that we are moved by the fate of fictional characters as they are real. This is what makes fiction lovable, this is what good

storytelling longs to achieve. To have their audiences invest their actual hearts and minds into fictional occasions and to have them experience the fiction as they experience reality. And indeed, this is what people do, how they respond to well executed narratives. Pavel (1986) argues that stories possess some kind of reality of their own and that readers can fully sympathize with the adventures and reflections of the characters, further arguing that people know, deep inside that fictional worlds are remote and shows this as the reason why people (mostly) don't fear monsters coming out of the screen or that they don't call the police for murders committed in movies. Yet Pavel agrees that even though audiences might be aware of the fictionality of these occasions, their fear and all other related emotions to the text are genuine. Suspension of disbelief, thus, is one of the most effective dynamics that allow people to enjoy fiction and it certainly is one of the main reasons that fictional realities affect belief and commitment in their dedicated audiences.

However, the suspension of disbelief is neither a guaranteed effect, nor its effects last forever on the audience. Audiences suspend disbelief for as long as a narrative immerses and convinces them, yet in just the same way, they will unsuspend it, if they are given reason to. When the audience is well involved in the events of the fiction, the judgment of its reality is stalled, therefore the perceived reality of the fiction resides. However if this connection with the work of fiction fluctuates and the audience get to think about the fictionality of the work, the illusion disappears (Holland 2008) and the line between the actual and fictional realities reemerges. Therefore considerable work is undertaken in various forms and in great detail in the production of fictional narratives by authors and studios alike to prevent such fluctuations by using specific techniques and investing considerable time and resources on the perceived reality of their works to ensure continuity on productional (see, Bordwell, Thompson 2009) and even more importantly on the story level.

Audience of a fictional work expect continuity in the story and its elements as, if new information which is contradictory to those provided before is presented, it will cause conflict in the audience resulting in cognitive dissonance. Concerning itself with the mental discomfort individuals experience in certain situations, cognitive dissonance, describes one of the causes capable of resulting in such stress for an individual as the confrontation of new information which conflicts existing beliefs, ideas and values (Festinger 1957). Exactly what happens in cases where new information presented by a narrative contradicts with those presented before which the audience had come to believe as real in the context of that fiction. Festinger states that individuals experiencing cognitive dissonance try to find ways to reduce the conflict. When the conflict is in the form of contradictions in the fictional reality, it would result in the individual bargaining in his mind to sort out the conflict by comparing the presented contradicting facts and this cognitive process of negotiating can be considered to be the notion of thought which breaks the clear connection that stood between the audience and the work, sustaining the suspension of disbelief. Referring to this notion, J.R.R. Tolkien mentions in his essay *On Fairy-Stories* (1947) that as long as the fictional setting remains consistent, it will be believable by the readers.

Another important and curious dynamic that occurs as an audience perceives a fictional narrative and thus its respective presented reality is how they conceptualize the completeness of the fictional world they are presented with. While the text of a work of fiction provides the information regarding the fictional world in question and the events that are occurring, it does not explicitly explain everything in detail. Just as we do not get to know everything in real life, we also do not get to know everything in fiction as well. For example, it might be written in a novel that a character was having lunch or another text might suggest that the characters saw an elephant. Yet, no text, regardless of its length, is all inclusive in regards to detailed information and thus the audience is often not explicitly given the information about details unrelated

to the progress of the plot of the story. In the above examples, the text might not explicitly state what the mentioned character was eating for lunch and while the text might mention an elephant, it might not explicitly describe the animal in question. In such situations, to make sense of (important and unimportant, relevant or irrelevant to the plot) things that are not explicitly stated by the text; audiences resort to other methods to construct a mental image of the narrative, in most cases, making assumptions by referring to previous statements by the text or to their own previous knowledge and opinions regarding the matter.

Walton (1990) and Ryan (1991) refer to this notion as the reality principle and minimal departure respectively and argue that readers imagine a fictional world to be as similar to the actual world they know and make changes only explicitly stated by the text, meaning that the audience picture the mentioned elephant as the elephant we all know unless explicitly stated in the text that in that fictional reality, elephants are different in a particular way (such as having wings, able to speak human languages and the like). Indeed such a method allows us to be able to comprehend texts that present similar or not so similar realities to that of our own. Fictional narratives of fantasy for example, depict considerably different realities than ours. This work has previously referred to the novel; *The Hobbit* for an example. It is time here, to show another nod of respect to Professor Tolkien again. Regardless how different a reality that Tolkien's works such as *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Silmarillion* present, readers imagine the acts and objects depicted in these novels as similarly to how they know those acts and object to be in real life regardless of the different nature of the fictional reality of those works than from the actual reality. When these books mention Gimli's battle axe for example, the readers assume something similar to a battle axe from the history of our own reality. And similarly, while a lot of laws and rules (as mentioned in the previous section) are different in the fictional reality presented by Tolkien's literature from the real world, such as the existence of wizards and other fantastic creatures, the readers take a lot of things such

as the existence of gravity and the needs for hydration/food for granted as they are not otherwise stated or differentially explained by the text. Gendler (2000), reminds about this notion that countless assumptions are extended from the real world to the fictional world unconsciously. However, the dynamic that Walton and Ryan mention regarding making modifications to our presumptions as dictated by the text at hand also occurs. For example, Bilbo Baggins' (later Frodo's) sword in *The Lord of the Rings* has a magical feature which allows it to glow in the dark if the enemy is close by. The readers first consider this sword as they do Gimli's axe, as what they know a sword to be. However when the text requires the readers to make a modification to their already existing knowledge about swords, such modification is made and the readers, upon learning more about this sword, accept this "unfamiliar" feature for a sword and further so, accept that such magical objects are present in the fictional reality of that text.

A similar process is also at play when the audience need (or feels the need) to fill in between the lines for information not explicitly given by the text. This is the situation in the above example, in which a character is having lunch but it is not specified what he is eating. Regardless whether this detail is relevant or not to the plot, shall the audience require to get this information, what they often do is something similar. Lewis (1978) argues that readers can reach conclusions about truth conditions regarding non-explicit matters of the text, using the explicitly provided material. The readers might not be told what the character is eating, but if in the text, the said character is previously stated to be a vegetarian, they can make assumptions accordingly. Salad perhaps, or maybe pasta. The reason that all these dynamics occur, according to Pavel, is that unlike the real world which is complete, fictional worlds aren't because of the non-given information there are and such information can not be retrieved as there is nowhere to retrieve it from. Pavel argues that, in actual reality, even if something is unknown, there is in principle, facts about everything and that they are only waiting to be discovered (Pavel 1986). This actually is true and false at

the same time. It is a most accurate statement that fictional worlds are incomplete beyond the explicit information given by their texts but also it is not true that there is nowhere to retrieve information about a fictional fact beyond the text that does not explicitly state it. Transfictionality has shown us that more than one text can relate to the same fiction, thus to the same fictional reality. Information, not given in a text, (in cases) can be given later on by another text that is a part of the same fictional reality as the original text. After all, it is in the second installment of Star Wars, *The Empire Strikes Back*, that the audience learned that Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's father, Anakin Skywalker. The connection between Vader and Luke, and the exact fate of Luke's father had remained unexplained in the first installment. Therefore, things unstated, or given only in between the lines by a text, for which the audience might have exercised reality principle/minimal departure or plain speculation to understand might be revealed later on, in a connected text only for the then given information to override the audience assumption as the textual fact, the fictional reality.

Therefore, in accordance with the distinction made by this work, the perceptual level of fictional reality accounts for the process through which the audience experience and comprehensively make sense of the ontological fictional reality presented by a fictional narrative. Indeed it has been argued that through a narrative, a cognitive mental construct, thus a mental image is built by the interpreter (audience) in response to the text (Scolari 2009, Ryan 2003). A dynamic that effectively occurs as a result of this very text decoding process.

### **2.3 FICTIONAL REALITY: TERMINOLOGY COMBINED**

Having completed the explanation of the ontological and perceptual levels of the notion that is the fictional reality respectively, then a compact, coherent, conclusive and referable definition of what a fictional reality is likely is in order. Simple as it

seems, because of the delicate and ultimately philosophical nature of the phenomena, taking this final step has been somewhat effortful in the field of narratology. Mary-Laure Ryan, one of the foremost figures in the field, has once noted that while the concept makes a lot of intuitive sense, it is very difficult to define in a theoretically rigorous way (Ryan 2013).

While difficult a task it might be, valiant, fruitful efforts have been undertaken for this very cause. With narratology, as a field of science remaining adamant in the discrete study of story and its narrative/discourse as respective elements (see Culler 2001), some of the most heroic of these efforts have concentrated on either the ontological or the perceptual (as referred to by this work) aspects of the notion. On the ontological side, extensive philosophical work of Thomas Pavel for example has focused on the existential mode of the notion (see Pavel 1986) as does the influential works of Marie-Laure Ryan that are aimed at theorizing the concept (see Ryan 2013). On the other hand, different methods and theory have been utilized in the respective examination of the audience perception side of narratives and their fictionality such as the psychology studies of Deena Skolnick and Paul Bloom (see Skolnick & Bloom 2006). Both of these positions provide valid angles of scrutiny and have resulted fruitfully. This work however, while borrowing from both parties and adding to them, has seen it necessary to include an exploration of both the ontological and perceptual levels of fictional reality and ultimately a combined understanding of the two as fictional reality is not the eventual goal for this work, but is the most important component of crossovers which is the object of desire that the interest of this work lies in.

Another difficulty, thus complication that often shows itself in the theoretical understanding of fictional reality seems to be the confusion in the terminology used, preferred. The difficulty that has so far bothered narratology in the acceptance of common terminology (Ryan, Thon 2014) has previously been mentioned by this work. In regards to the effect of this ongoing problem on the notion of fictional



reality, Zhang (2018) notes that terms such as storyworld, world, universe, narrative and story (among other terms) has so far been interchangeably used in this certain context. One can easily deduce how the continued and often for same notion use of the mentioned terms can add to the confusion in the field, further taking into consideration that many of these terms also have different meanings, significations. This work has seen it fit to refer the notion with the term “fictional reality” instead of joining in on the adoption of one of these other terms. Now also seems to be a good time to explain why.

As explained in the divided exploration of the notion, the notion of fictional reality serves as the in-fictional-context counterpart of our actuality which we call reality. Therefore, simple as may be, it is the decision and thus the argument of this work to term the fictional counterpart of reality, by simply adding the adjective signifying its fictionality as fictional reality. This decision in terminology is also guided by the fact that fictional reality, while is the essence and the most important component of a fictional narrative, signifies a most effective yet abstract entity (as in actual reality), thus the use of a term that has physical implications (such as world, universe and the like) while makes it easier in matters of practical application, seems to be a possible cause for complication in the examination of the philosophical implications of the notion. As to why this work has preferred to avoid the other previously used terminology, some brief explanations might be in order.

The term storyworld has so far proven to be one of the most employed term for the notion in the academic literature as it signifies a domain that is dictated by a respective reality. However, with its main focus of interest being in the transfictional relationships between distinct fictional domains, this work has opted for a term with an abstract meaning that does not carry the physical, planetary connotations of using a term including the word world as such an employment has the tendency to be rather limiting for the semantic necessity. The semantic pitfall of using terms with physical connotations in this matter become apparent as conceptualizing the thought of the

transcendence, transposition and expansion (which are possible and accepted relations of and acts regarding transfictionality) of a world does not help to simplify but further semantically complicate an already philosophically complicated matter. There simply is no need for skipping when we are already often walking on thin ice.

Regarding other previously used terms, terms such as narrative and story already account for other complete and terminologically accepted phenomenas and finally while the terms fictional (or cinematic per se) universe and fictional reality carry similar overtones, in the mass media fueled convergence culture (see Jenkins 2003) of our day, the term fictional universe has come to have other meanings for the media industry apart from signifying the coexistence in the same universe and furthermore, the term simply does not adequately cover the ontological connotations of the term fictional reality as a universe is, by nature, not a synonym of reality, but something that is dictated by one. It is therefore, the accepted term and the proposition of this work that fictional reality, as the most fitting term for the job, is employed to refer to the relevant notion-extraordinaire.

Having explored the respective ontological and perceptual levels of the notion that is the fictional reality and having elaborated on the reasoning for the choice of terminology of this work, it is then time to combine the two aspects of the notion into the phenomena itself.

Fictional reality is the existential mode of relative reality that is ontologically effective in a specific fictional domain. It is the force that turns artistic expression of a narrative into the construct that is a fixed fabric of reality which those that are within it are bound by and those that are the audience of it percept as beyond its textuality. A notion that grants the world(s) and all their existents that belong to it, their relative actuality.

Thus it is a notion that, through transfictionality, can effect beyond the world of its original presentation. You see where this is going? Behold! As crossovers are on the horizon. However, before this work gets to its original destination where the actual target of its theorization lies, there is one final aspect to consider.

### **3. DEFINING AUTHORITY OF FICTIONAL REALITY**

So far, this work has established that fictional reality is the foundation, the ontological fabric and thus the most important component of a fictional narrative and having extensively elaborated on the concept, now it is time to move on from the what to who.

In the conclusion of the previous section, this work also has referred to the notion of fictional reality as a force. A powerful kind of force, the ability to operate of which grants its holder the means of determining facts and the authority to present future (or retrospective) stories regarding the reality in question. So can anyone wield this power and determine fictional reality regarding a respective narrative? Apparently not.

For example, after fifty years on the center stage of popular culture, STAR WARS is a global phenomena and countless narrative content is created for it everyday in the form of various media by studios, companies and individuals alike, both in official and unofficial capacity. However, not all these works that are produced in regards to STAR WARS enter and get accepted into the fictional reality of the franchise but a select few. The same notion applies to all kinds of fictional narratives, for example to classical novels. Even though it is possible to find numerous continuation novels written by admirers to classic novels such as Don Quixote or Treasure Island, literary

history does not recognize these works that aspire to sequel such classics as their accepted continuations. And similarly, while fan fiction is a huge trend in which eager fans of various narratives and franchises create narrative content regarding stories (and by using the characters) of the beloved texts that they follow with admiration, their works do not constitute as (fictionally) occurred in the acting fictional realities of these franchises. Thus, while some narratives are added up to the fictional realities that they refer to, others simply do not. So why is that?

Well, this all comes down to the force that this work has mentioned before and this is a kind of force that grants those that can wield it spectacular abilities, namely and most specifically the authority to determine fictional reality in the context of a respective fiction. It is an ability that distinguishes the narratives that are produced by its wielder(s) by cementing their places in the relevant fictional histories and allows for the statements of these texts to go into the records as the fictional facts of the relevant fictional reality. It is an ability reserved for the respective chosen ones (person or company) respectively for every single fictional reality that exists. However one can not obtain this wonderful ability in a simple fashion such as by getting bit by a radioactive spider as it is a little bit more of a legally complicated matter than that. This special ability is only granted by the ownership of intellectual property.

This would be a good point to use an analogy. For example, in real life, one is responsible for his own actions. If you were to, for example, decide to move to Italy, as long as you take the actions necessary in the actualization of your decision, the power to move to Italy remains yours. However, even though you move to Italy, someone may claim that you instead moved to Japan. In this claim, they might provide extended stories about your supposed adventures in Japan yet this claim, no matter how detailed or extensive it might be, does not change the fact that you actually moved to Italy. The claimed stories supposedly about your life in Japan, may be entertaining, embarrassing or perhaps even excellent, better than your actual

stories in Italy however their such qualities remain of their own, not effecting your actuality. As it is you who maintain the decision making and action taking control of your own life (of course as much as life allows you to do so), the claims or stories by people holding no actual control on your life does not determine the progress, nor the reality of your life. This dynamic in fact is very similar to that in fiction. It is the person (or company) holding the ownership of the intellectual property of a character, story or title that maintains the right to determine reality in the context of that specific entity or work of fiction. Even though others, without holding any intellectual property rights on the specific matter, might provide content, such contents will lack the authority to be considered as fictional reality for that specific character, story or original work, unless approved by the actual holder of the authority given by the ownership of the intellectual property as fictionally real.

Accordingly, the next subsection will explore further into the legal relationships regarding intellectual property ownership, thus copyrights and the effects of these powers that be on fictional narratives.

### **3.1 COPYRIGHT RELATIONSHIPS**

The ownership of intellectual property regarding a work of fiction (or franchise for works that expand well beyond their original text and medium) is determined legally and made official by copyright relationships. Laws regarding intellectual property ownership, in nature, act very similar to traditional property ownership law. With a robust example; similar to how the title and registration of a motor vehicle officiate its ownership in regards to property law, intellectual property ownership similarly grants its holder(s) the legal authority to claim ownership of works of fiction as well as the authority and the related responsibility regarding all the existents of these narratives.

To be able to better understand how integral copyrights are to and what they do for fictional narratives (and all artistic works of similar nature), a good place to start would be to explain what a copyright exactly is. World Intellectual Property Organization (shortly WIPO) explains copyright legislation to be part of the wider body of law known as intellectual property (IP) which refers to the creations of the human mind. Intellectual property rights protect the interests of innovators and creators by giving them rights over their creations (WIPO 2016). A non-exhaustive list of the kind of things that are protected by intellectual property rights listed by The Convention of Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (1967) include; literary and artistic works, scientific works/discoveries, inventions of all fields of human endeavor, industrial designs, trademarks and commercial names. Understandable from the items in the list, intellectual property concerns itself both with artistic and industrial contexts. Very much so that, intellectual property is often divided into two branches with them being "Industrial Property" which takes a range of forms such as patents, industrial designs, trademarks with the aim being to protect against unfair competition and "Copyrights" which regard the literary and artistic creations such as books, drawings, movies, audio recordings with the aim being to protect the rights of the artists (WIPO 2016).

Historically, the importance of protecting intellectual property was first recognized in the 1883 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property and was furthered by the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. Even though some understanding of copyrights existed beforehand, it was with the Berne Convention that copyrights as we know today took shape and protection for authors and artists were achieved internationally in the countries that signed the convention's agreement (Day O'Connor 2002, WIPO 2016). Some countries that had not originally signed the agreement and had went on to form agreements of their own in smaller groups, in time joined in to the Berne conditions. Later, the regulations of the Berne Convention were incorporated into the World

Trade Organization's TRIPS agreement in 1995, which effectively gave Berne near-global application (MacQueen, Waelde and Laurie 2007).

What copyrights aim to achieve is to provide artists the legal rights, thus power and standing to enable them to be able to protect their artistic works. Let's go back to the motor vehicle example. While it might seem rude to compare fictional narratives (or other similar artistic works) to cars, one can not deny that there are similarities between, for example, the classical noir movie *The Maltese Falcon* or Richard Matheson's hit novel *I Am Legend* and Ferrari FXX or Shelby Daytona Coupe. All these examples, after all, are works of beautiful, precious art. Going further by this analogy, if there was no legal component to car ownership thus without any legally binding, verifiable way (legal document and the law to officiate it) to prove ownership, anybody could just drive away in your car and in such a God forbid situation, it would be then awful difficult to prove that it is indeed your car. Similarly, without legal documents and records, a remarkable amount of complication and conflict would occur in the buying or selling of any motor vehicles. And finally, again, without a sign of ownership, one would not be able to make any modifications or repairs to their car in a legal, official way or even worse, without the laws and legality to ensure private property of such; anyone could make any modification to your car without your permission. It would be a source of unconceivable stress and sadness to wake up one day and to see that your breathtaking factory red Ferrari FXX has been painted to a color of your utmost dislike by a random person.

It would be appropriate to start the examination of copyrights, by examining how the ownership of a copyright is determined. Contereras (2020) states that copyright ownership is initially in the author of a work, a fact legalized by copyright acts around the World. WIPO (2016) also notes the author of a work to generally be the owner of copyright at the first instance. As soon as Stieg Larsson had finished writing his novel *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (Man som hatar Kvinnor, its original name) for example, he automatically was the copyright owner as according to the

global recognition of copyrights, a created work is considered protected as soon as it is conceived into existence. Therefore there is no specific requirement to register a work for it to be copyrighted. However, various registration mechanisms do exist, operated by governments, often by ministries of culture that enable artists to register a copy of the complete form of their artistic work which not only allows artists to be in possession of legal documents regarding the ownership of their respective works but also to make processes much easier in the event of future legal conflicts.

Even though, it is the original author (artist) of an artistic work that generally holds the copyright, exceptions do exist. In cases, in which artist(s) produce the work under the employment of an employer (real person or company) that holds the copyright regarding the work they are producing, the copyright of the produced work is considered belonging to the employer, not the employee (Contereras 2020, WIPO 2016). This is also often the case in made for hire works (Contereras 2020), for which the artist(s) involved may not necessarily be direct employees. In such cases, especially involving freelance artists, the contracts for the specific work of question determine the legal standing and ownership. For example, even though a great number of people are employed by DC Comics, many of whom are artists; working on comics such as Batman, Birds of Prey and Flash, providing narrative elements for these comics by writing stories, drawing and colouring, etc., because of their employee status, even though they are credited for their work, the copyrights of the produced titles and the narrative elements included (such as characters) remain that of their employer's, the DC Comics.

There is also the question of the transfer of the ownership of intellectual property, thus copyrights, often in commercial context. Bettig (1996) argues that capitalism has led to the commodification of many elements of social life, which had no economic value at earlier stages in life. Indeed, in the world we live in today, some of the most valuable things are not physical but intellectual properties, including the copyrights, the intellectual properties of fictional narratives, franchises. An example to just how



much financial value that some of these most prized intellectual belongings have come to be can be shown by the 2012 purchase of the STAR WARS franchise by Disney which according to CNBC (2012) was conducted with price tag of 4.05 billion dollars. Quite a bargain actually, considering the thing sold was an entire galaxy, even though it existed a long time ago, and it was far far away. Even though not so often for amounts that are as ridiculous, transfers (often by sale) of intellectual property rights are rather frequent occasions. Dehns (2017) remind that intellectual property rights, due to their nature as property rights, can be bought or sold or licensed. Contreras (2020) further reminds that, like real and private property, intellectual properties can be conveyed through contract, bankruptcy sale, will, intestate succession and also by corporate transactions such as mergers, asset sales and stock sales.

There are two different forms in which transfer of complete or some features of a copyright that can occur; these are the forms of "Assignment" and "Licensing" (WIPO 2016). In the transfer form of assignment, the complete transfer of the property right, therefore a new rights owner is in question. In such cases, the rights given by the copyright to authorize or prohibit certain acts gets transferred. This form, then accounts for the complete transfer of the intellectual property. Referring back to the motor vehicle analogy, it is for an artistic work, the equivalent of a car sale/title transfer. Just as if you sold your car (or transferred its title, registration) to another person. Then, this hypothetical new person becomes the owner of the said car, thus gains certain rights such as to make modifications to, store, sell, or even destroy the car. The acquisition of STAR WARS by Disney can again be shown as an example here. As Disney has acquired all intellectual property rights regarding STAR WARS, they became the holder of all related such rights regarding STAR WARS. Just like the car analogy, with this purchase, Disney obtained the authority needed to be able to make modifications to STAR WARS, just as they have done so by removing some of the prior to their acquisition narratives from STAR WARS' fictional history and

chose to officially continue it with those produced by their own. Disney has stored parts of STAR WARS, such as canceling, thus pausing the hit animated series The Clone Wars for many years, before eventually resuming it by allowing the production of a limited episode final season to cap off the series. And similarly, by the right given by their ownership of the intellectual property of STAR WARS, they can, if they desire, in a future date resell the intellectual property.

The other possible form of copyright relationship is by licensing. Unlike assignment, in the form of licensing, the transfer of the ownership of intellectual property is not of the question. In licensing, the rights owner retains the ownership of the intellectual property, thus the copyright, however, through a contract, authorizes a third party (or third parties) to carry out certain acts (execution of which is originally given to the author/artist by the copyright) for a predetermined certain time and purpose. Referring back to the car analogy, this is similar to the car owner, maintaining the ownership of their car but signing a contract with a friend or a company, allowing them to rent the car for a certain amount of time and in return for an agreed payment. This form of a copyright relationship is again a frequent occasion in the production of works regarding fictional narratives. For example, this is often the case in book deals that authors sign with publishing houses in which the author retains the copyright, however, through a contract, the publisher gains certain rights regarding the relevant work such as the right to print a certain number of books as well as to market and sell them for the profit of both parties. Licensing is not only made use of by artists but also is often utilized by companies as well, as many companies use the expertise of various other individuals or companies to further produce works regarding titles for which they hold the intellectual property rights of. For example, for many years Dark Horse Comics, through a license agreement with the respective rights holders, has produced and printed STAR WARS comics. Shown by the previous examples, licensing agreements allow the right holders to bring together the powers given by their rights through the ownership of intellectual

property and the expertise of third parties that they require in desired productions. Similarly, in the author/publisher relationship; the author producing the work, through licensing of his work, benefit from the printing and distribution abilities of the publisher. In the comics example, the right holder of a franchise, again through licensing, benefit from the expertise of another production company, in that case a comics producer, to expand their franchise. Licensing, therefore also is a common tactic employed in carrying narratives into new media. Resuming the STAR WARS example, their licensing relationships also allows the STAR WARS narrative to expand into video games, for example with SONY being licensed to produce and run the MMORPG game STAR WARS Galaxies or Hasbro producing the official STAR WARS toys through a license.

This is a good point to elaborate a little bit further on the rights provided by the ownership of intellectual property. As stated, intellectual property is divided into "Industrial Property" and "Copyrights". As this work concerns itself with crossovers, fictional narratives and thus with artistic works; the interest of this work is on the "Copyright" side in this division. Accordingly, moving away from the industrial side of the equation towards a deeper exploration of artistic copyrights; according to WIPO (2016), the rights protected by copyrights can be further divided into *Economic Rights* and *Moral Rights*.

Economic rights (in the context of copyrights) allow for the right owners to derive the financial rewards from the use of their works by others. Just like any kind of property, the rights holder(s) of an intellectual property has, and is legally given, the right to decide how their work is to be used. Copyright owners have the right to prevent the use of their works without their permission and accordingly they have the initiative to allow (and limit) the use of their work through their permission (such as with licensing agreements). According to WIPO (2016), rights owners accordingly can choose to authorize or prohibit; the distribution of copies, public performances, broadcasting to public, translation and adaptation of their works.

Moral rights on the other hand are less about commercial dynamics and have more to do with artistic and ethical contexts. Moral rights are meant to protect the artistic integrity of a work of art while also protecting the connection between the artist and the work. It should thus be of no surprise that in some languages, copyrights are referred to as author's rights. According to WIPO (2016), moral rights, which are also specifically recognized by the Berne Convention and its conditions, have two aims. The first is to protect the author's (artist's) right to claim authorship of his/her work, which is also referred occasionally as "the right of paternity/attribution" and the second is to give authors (artists) the right to object to any distortion or modification of their works against their wishes, a feature that puts even further emphasis on the authorial authority. A condition which, in the context of narrative arts; underlines the artists (the original holder of the intellectual property) as the moral holder of the authority on the fictional reality of their works.

All these come to show that ownership of intellectual property is the key to attaining and maintaining various rights regarding an artistic work such as a work of fiction or franchise. And all these dynamics that occur on both artistic as well as commercial levels in order to secure and protect these rights, show that there are many powers that come along with these rights, such as the prementioned force and the authority of determining fictional reality.

In relation to all these dynamics, then those who do not hold any rights regarding a work of fiction and thus to the fictional entities that come with it through the ownership of the intellectual property (or by the permitted use of some of these rights through a copyright relationship such a licensing) simply can not produce content regarding these narratives and their entities. With this being the situation, the position of intellectual property law on unofficially produced narrative content such as fan fiction and parodies regarding original (copyrighted) works of fiction is also worthy

of examination. Such cases are of "for personal use" exemption, which falls into the category that is often referred to as "Fair Use" after the term used for the situation in American Copyright Act of 1976. Most countries, in their respective copyright laws, include national level exceptions that allow for the educational, for private study, parody and most importantly non-commercial uses of copyrighted materials (see Cornell 2020). This is the very reason that when people upload clips from commercial movies on YouTube, they often include a note in the video description stating that they own no rights to the video and further claim that their upload is purely for educational purposes covered under fair use. A decent (and sometimes effective) shot at trying keep the shared video online and not taken down by the actual rights holder of the content in the video.

Exactly what is and is not covered as fair use is not so easy a matter to resolve. Carlette (2011) reminds that determining whether people have used copyrighted materials without permission within fair use limits is a difficult matter and is very case specific, further stating that the decisive factors for such cases when they reach the courts are the purpose of use, whether the use was of commercial intention, the amount of material used and the possible effect of this use on the potential market value of the copyrighted work in question. It is then understood that, unofficial production of (and about) narratives regarding fictional realities, the authority to determine reality regarding which belongs elsewhere is not acceptable without permission by the intellectual property law, unless it is for non-commercial, personal use. Thus, simply, while it is more than reasonable for dedicated fans to write their own adventures including their favourite heroes for personal entertainment or to show their friends, one can not just go around trying to market the X-MEN movie they shot themselves for ticket sales, claiming it to be the sequel (or reboot, might be more believable) of the series without some serious consequences.

Troubling lack of legality of such a situation and the likely conviction from copyright infringement punishable by possibly remarkable financial remedies which are likely to be more scary than facing the claws of Wolverine aside, after the elaboration of this work regarding moral rights, it should also be stressed here that on an ethical level; any attempts to produce narratives for beyond personal enjoyment regarding a work of fiction, the authorial ownership of which lies elsewhere is also remarkably problematic. Art is, among for the sake of art itself as the saying goes, to a great degree for the enjoyment of people. And the enjoyment of art may take many shapes in different people. While some may choose to experience their appreciation of art by being its audience, some may further their appreciation into the production of replicative or derivative works of the original work of art as a nod of their respect for it. Such a dynamic might come in many shapes and forms and might be deserving of appreciation itself as did the original work. Thus it should be of note here that what is argued to be of a moral and ethical violation here by this work is not the works or derivative art that come to be as forms of respect to the original which are not meant or claimed to be a part of the original but those that are produced not of respect for the original but with the intention of taking advantage of the original work. If you are a great person, it would be an honor for you when people hang your portrait on their walls or erect your statues, however it becomes a different matter entirely, problematic on several fronts, if some people start posing for portraits and statues with the claim that they are you so they can sell those pictures.

To wrap it up, with the provided elaborations and examinations of all the mentioned rights, combined with all the explained copyright relationships and dynamics, ownership of intellectual property then becomes the force; clearly, legally and in practice, effectively giving the authority of determining fictional reality regarding an artistic fictional narrative, originally to its author (the original holder of the copyright) or to other acting owners of the intellectual property regarding the work in cases in which the copyright is transferred in part or full to another party or

parties through the mentioned copyright transactions. While it is again the same force that effectively prohibits others who lack the ownership of these rights (or any copyright relationships, that provide them with some rights) from exercising the ability to determine fictional reality regarding works that they have no valid legal claim to.

### **3.2 HISTORIES OF FICTION: CANON**

The roles of both the authorial authority and that of the ownership of intellectual property as being the decisive factors on the ability to determine fictional reality is also accepted in narrative studies. In regards to this subject, Mary-Laure Ryan (2013) refers to the Don Quixote example. Some background on the case might be in order. After Miguel de Cervantes published his most acclaimed Don Quixote in 1605; in 1614, Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda wrote an unauthorized sequel to the classic novel without Cervantes' permission. However, then Cervantes himself wrote and published the second volume and thus the accepted sequel of Don Quixote in 1615 (which notably ridicules the unofficial sequel in quite a remarkable and clever way). In her work, Ryan critically questions whether Cervantes' and de Avellaneda's works take place in the same world, thus the same fictional reality and dismisses that possibility further so as Cervantes' sequel contradicts that of de Avellaneda and argues that Cervantes' work takes precedence. In similar fashion, she argues that while she has no problem accepting that various narratives produced (or licensed) by George Lucas (who still had all the rights to STAR WARS back when Ryan wrote this work) relate to the same storyworld, she doubts whether those that are produced by others do so. In support, Proctor (2018) makes the same argument for works regarding Stephen King.

In the context of narrative studies, the most elaborated connection between intellectual property ownership and the power to determine fictional reality is proposed by Colin Harvey (2014) who has referred to Halbwachs (1950) for the relationship between law and remembering. In his transmedia taxonomy in which he examines narratives (that share a fictional reality) which are spread across media through a transmedia strategy, while explaining this dynamic, Harvey uses the term “legally proscribed memory” as he mentions the power of legal relationships (such as copyrights) have on determining what will and will not be remembered (as happened) as a narrative moves forward. Harvey extensively argues that memory is circumscribed by legally binding documents in transmedia production (thus in all transfictional narratives) and holds the concept of memory to be central as he states that intellectual property rights owners control how much other bases are afforded to access particular memories (of fictional events that are to be counted as occurred).

Therefore, narratives produced (or approved through license) by the actual holder of the authority to determine fictional reality (in regards to a specific character, story or work) given by the ownership of the intellectual property constitute the historical component of a fictional reality which is often referred simply as canon. It was Ronald Knox who used the word canon, in this context, in a 1911 essay in which he differentiated Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s works regarding Sherlock Holmes through their canonicity from later works by other authors (Haining 1993), effectively making the very argument. Since we are mentioning famous detectives, in similar fashion, a collective study conducted by Lincoln City Libraries (2017) regarding Agatha Christie’s flagship detective Hercules Poirot proposed that only works by Christie, herself are considered canon for Poirot while all further works (written by others) are considered secondary material by fans and biographers.

Felan Parker who extensively studied franchise canon through the example of STAR WARS also underlines that canon, as a term, has come describe authenticity and legitimacy of an individual text in both fan and industry discourses (Parker



2013). Indeed only (fictional) events, stories and their narratives that are included in the canon of a specific character, work or franchise count as occurred in the respective fictional realities of these entities. Canons in this sense are timelines of events and occurrences that make up the historical component of fictional realities and similar to the way that what is written in real history books are governed by the powers that be in the actual reality, what is written in the histories of fictional realities (thus canons) are governed by copyrights and the ownership of intellectual property in a similar sense.

In support, Baker (2008) writes about the process (pre-Disney) LucasArts applied in the controlling of the content material the company had outsourced to other authors/artists and mentions the scrutiny process such works needed to go through and only then, if validated by LucasArts, such works were accepted into the STAR WARS canon, a process underlining both the possession of the control authority of canon by the owner of intellectual property, also stressing the importance of story continuity. Proctor and Freeman (2007), in accordance, show George Lucas and LucasArts licensing as the official rulers regarding canon in STAR WARS. Similarly, Proctor (2018), in his study regarding Stephen King's works, state that King's approval serves as a point of authenticity for the licensed works of the respective franchise.

Before completing this section, fan fiction also is worthy of special mention as it is the dedicated support of the fans of any series of fiction that enable it to continue and prosper and it is a common sight to see such devotion and dedication result in fan fiction. While fan fiction often produces works of great quality, as its content creators lack the authority of intellectual property rights to the original series they are writing or producing content about, works of fan fiction remain outside of canon.

However some fan fiction works, which gain considerable recognition might be accepted by the actual authority of the related franchise into canon or may become

fanon (see Parker 2013) which means they are generally accepted as fictionally real among the fans even though lacking canonicity.

Throughout the last few sections, this work has taken a journey of exploration into a number of concepts in the context of narrative fiction. This exploration has taken us to a number of peculiar horizons, the first of which was the concept of fictional reality itself which this work divided into its ontological and perceptual components for further scrutiny before bringing it back together to be able to comprehend the notion in its entirety. This journey has also saw us explore where the authority to determine this kind of reality comes from and that part of the trip also took us on a little detour through the legal labyrinth of copyright relationships. And finally, this journey allowed us to see how history is made on a fictional level as we explored how canons are formed.

A crossover is a delicate occasion, an act that perhaps accounts for the most ontologically delicate kind of narratives in fiction, and to be executed well, requires a smooth operation. To be conducted, a crossover requires a number of components that are actually required by all standalone fictional narratives but in a crossover, these components act in a rather heightened sense as the specialty of such a narrative comes from it being a hub that connects several separate narratives. Therefore it is these components that supply the strong foundation a crossover narrative requires to be able to carry the weight of all its participants. And at this point of the journey of this work, with all these concepts and components now explored, explained and thus in place, it will be the pleasure of this work to take the start of its main theorization effort by introducing the Crossover Framework.

#### **4. THE CROSSOVER FRAMEWORK**

It would be most appropriate, if not a bit poetic, to start the introduction of this framework regarding a narrative concept, thus storytelling, with a story. A number of years ago, I was roaming the local bazaar of Beşiktaş, Istanbul. Something I do rather often as experience has thought me that quite remarkable gems can be found at such places among fresh fruits and vegetables. That day, I came across a vendor selling various toys, puzzles and games of the like all stacked up on a pile. As a keen collector, I am not the least ashamed to admit that I have jumped on this opportunity to explore this seller's offerings and thus I joined a few children, quarter my age, in their search for a treasure among this promising labyrinth. And indeed, soon enough, I came across a treasure that would help set me on the journey of presenting my own Crossover Framework.

What I had found was a toy figure set. An unlicensed, clearly unofficial production, labeled with a branding that neatly and simply said "SPECIAL STYLES HERO" on the cover. This bazaar found treasure was a box set of three plastic figures, each approximately 14cm. of height, the most interesting thing about which was who these figures were, or were meant to be. The first of these figures seemed to be a capeless, armored Batman, the second a bulky Spider-Man and the third looked like Iron Man in a dark armor. This great meet-up of remarkable heroes did not end there either. On the packaging of the toy set, there were also pictures of Antonio Banderas as Zorro The Masked Warrior, Superman and The Mighty Power Rangers. So pretty much all the heavyhitters of the contemporary popular culture, with a few notable exceptions, were on or in that box in one way or another.

Quickly making the purchase of this priceless treasure for a quite a bargain, I have brought my toy figure set home. And looking at it , I have soon found myself not only adoring this lovely piece of peculiar playware but also dwelling on the ontological implications that came along as this peculiar representation of these heroes were brought together. My curiosity in the matter however was not limited to the instance at hand but it was more about the way how the similar dynamic takes place in the context of narrative arts and the media industry that conveys it.

**Figure 4.1:** Crossover Framework: The Subject and The Author



This work has previously referred to the generally accepted conception of a crossover as the appearance of characters and/or concepts of a specific work of fiction, appearing in another discrete work. While of course a crossover is a narrative act and thus would only occur if the act is executed in a narrative of fiction, yet on a broader level, one can not deny that my bazaar found toy set carries the general features of that definition of crossovers. I would here kindly ask you to just indulge this analogy for the sake of the argument that is to be made in reference to it. Batman

is a character, the flagship character, of DC Comics, while Spidey and Iron Man are icons of Marvel. Two companies that are direct rivals of each other. Meanwhile it is also rather clear a situation for all 21st century media consumers of popular culture that, characters of DC and Marvel (let alone Zorro and Power Rangers) do not live in the same world or in other words, the same fictional reality. However, my bazaar treasure and its surely brave producers have been able to navigate through the respective fictional realities that these characters belonged, while doing so literally bypassing all the copyrights and the related intellectual property law and they, remarkably managed to bring these characters together. Something that DC Comics and Marvel themselves, as the giants they are, are only very rarely able to achieve. But what does this really say about this gettogether and its implications?

Is it really, for the sake of it really, that simple to cross over characters from the places of their respective existence into any narrative situation whatsoever that any random attempt of such an act in the form of a narrative automatically qualify as a crossover? Can then anyone who puts together two or more discrete characters produce a crossover story and if done so would these characters really have crossed over? Would any stories that would come along as the result of such gettogethers count as happened in the respective histories, memories of these individual characters?

A lot of questions have arisen from a set of toy figures, but isn't that the point of toys, to fuel imagination and then to be a part of the resulting narratives. And what if we were to simply answer any and all of these questions "yes"! Just imagine the conceptional, terminological and the narrativisticly ontological chaos and confusion that such a thing would result in.

Well, it is more than possible to argue that, that is exactly the current situation regarding crossovers in academical and to a lesser degree in practitioner contexts. This work has mentioned before that a crossover, as a concept, remains a vague entity

in academic literature, that the general consensus on the idea of it is more than often further complicated by various different interpretations and that an elaborate definition of the act is not currently available. There is a tendency in the current academic literature (and to a certain point in the practitioner methodology of some circles) to answer all the hypothetical questions asked above with a simple yes, which effectively categorizes any and all such meet-ups and bring-togethers of discrete fictional characters as crossovers, which in relation creates an anything goes approach to the concept. Not surprisingly, it is a rather proven situation that in fields of science if an anything goes approach is adopted regarding a certain matter then nothing really ever goes. Or even worse, everything goes somewhere, with very few eventually arriving to where they were supposed to.

In the current state of affairs, without a narrow definition of crossovers as well as specific criteria through which whether a specific work can be categorized as so can be judged; the term crossover is being used to refer to a vast array of diverse fictional works of various artistic natures and production capacity. This work argues that, this is the very reason causing the current confusion as well as the anything goes approach in the field and to remedy this problem, this Crossover Framework will begin by presenting a set of normative narrative criteria that a work of fiction must meet in order to be defined as a crossover.

Among the previous hypothetical questions above which regarded the exact nature of the concept of crossovers; the unlikely and equally fascinating meeting of characters in my unique figure set also brings about further questions regarding the possibilities and endresults of such gettogethers. Questions such as; Can any text (and in connection, its characters, entities) cross over with any other text (and their entities) or are there any narrative limitations for this? And finally, in the case of such a narrative of the kind, does it then effectively count as these characters have met and thus coexist? The peculiar figure set keeps on providing questions, however, it is the most sincere ambition of this framework to answer these questions as well through an

adaptation of the Possible Worlds Theory to assess how crossover compatibility can be determined between respective works of fiction and an exhaustive exploration of the ramifications of a crossover for the fictional realities involved in it, respectively.

Crossovers have for a long time accounted for some of the most enjoyable, remarkable yet sometimes controversial stories in the modern era of narrative arts, yet the dedicated study they deserve have been neglected in the field for an equally long time. From Gil Grissom hunting serial killers together with Jack Malone on primetime television to the Avengers assembling on the silver screen; from characters of Stephen King's hit novels leapfrogging between his numerous works to the X-MEN and Spider-Man joining forces on both cartoons and comics, crossovers are all around us and they have without a doubt become one of the prominent narrative ways of contemporary storytelling. It is due time that a framework is produced for the narrow definition of the concept by exploring the exact nature of the act that also theorizes the ontological possibilities for and ramifications of crossovers. Behold! The worlds are colliding and the Crossover Framework begins here to solve the mystery of the bridges that stand between them.

#### **4.1 CROSSOVER QUALIFICATION**

On its journey to this point, this work has explored and elaborated a number of narrative components. The most important of these was the notion of fictional reality which provides the ontological foundation on which a work of fiction builds its narrative(s) and through which all the entities belonging to that specific fictional reality gain and enjoy their relative actuality. Through this work's exploration of fictional reality, the notion proved not to be just a component of standalone narratives but one that can reach beyond the original narrative that presents it through transfictionality. And in relation, with all fictional entities being individuated and relatively actualized by the fictional realities they exist through, any transfictional

movement of these entities bring along the relevant fictional reality in question as both a necessity and side effect. In this sense, crossovers, which this work has accordingly established to be an act of transfictionality, become bridges through which this very fabric of relative reality floats.

In relation to fictional reality, this work has also explored the dynamics of intellectual property ownership which grant those that hold it; the authority to determine facts regarding a respective fictional reality, while further exploring the concept of fictional canon through which texts acquire legitimacy by taking their rightful places in the relevant fictional history, memory.

Not all fictional works are created equal. This is not a statement regarding quality but one that regards authenticity and officiality. Depending on its relationship with and its inner dynamics of these components, namely; the fictional reality, intellectual property and canon respectively, texts exist on a wide spectrum of statuses regarding their authenticity. Respective texts may provide their own fictional reality or through transfictionality, they might be part of, thus belong in the same one with other texts. Depending on whether the author and/or producer holds possession of (or is licensed to operate with) the relevant intellectual property, texts may or may not acquire officiality. And similarly official and unofficial texts, through their inclusion into or exclusion from canon may or may not end up with a place in the accepted history of a fictional reality.

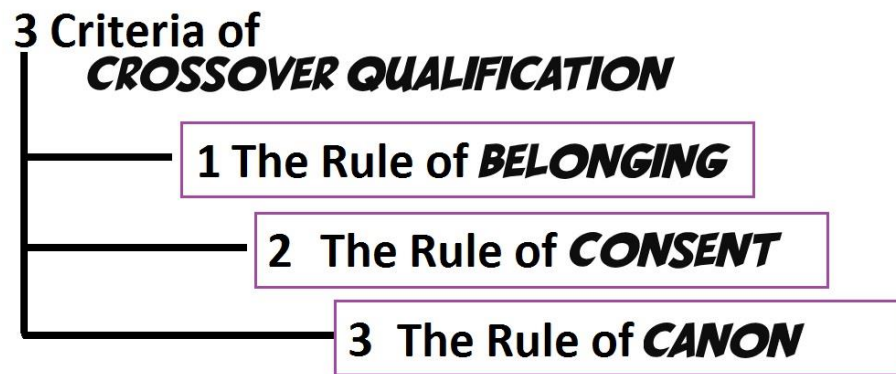
It is possible to categorize and examine standalone texts and narratives according to these dynamics and relationships. And while not all standalone fictional works are of equal standing in these contexts, neither are crossovers in a very similar way.

Accordingly, fictional reality, the most important narrative component is going to be the center point of approach of the Crossover Framework in its narrow definition and theorization of crossovers. What this framework will now aim to do is to create a criteria set of qualification requirements which will be applicable to fictional



narratives with crossover-like appearance and features. This criteria set have been chosen with the intention of understanding the narrative, ontological and accordingly philosophical nature and implications of crossovers and to be able to distinguish the narratives that do meet the normative criteria into a category of their own as crossovers while proposing different categories for similar in nature works that do not satisfy these requirements.

**Figure 4.2:** Crossover Framework's Three Criteria Rules of Crossover Qualification



The three normative criteria a work must meet for crossover qualification are termed by this work as the rules of **Belonging**; for the requirement that the entities crossing over has distinct and separate places of origination apart from the text they will be visiting, **Consent**; for the willingness of the crossing entities in their participation of the crossover narrative and **Canon**; for the legitimacy of the produced text.

With the three rules of the normative qualification criteria now in place, it is then time to elaborate on the each rule and its effect in and for a crossover narrative.

#### **4.1.1 The Rule of Belonging**

Let's start with the simplest condition that a narrative must present to constitute a crossover; that a cross over of somethings from one place to another must occur in and for the conduction of the said narrative. Now the important thing of course is to clearly define what exactly is doing the crossing and from where to where, in and for a crossover narrative.

While introducing the nature of crossovers, this work has established that a crossover is an act of transfictionality. And transfictionality, by concept, is the migration of fictional entities across different texts (Saint-Gelais 2005, Ryan 2008, Freeman 2016). Thus it becomes clear and apparent that in a fictional crossover, the crossing is being done by fictional entities. With fictional reality being the main point of approach of this work, let's explore deeper into the ontological nature of those entities.

Parsons (1980) has categorized objects (used as a synonym to entities in this context by Parsons) in fiction into three groups and lists them as Native, Immigrant and Surrogate. By native, Parsons refers to the fictional objects (such as characters) that are original to the text. An example can be Gil Grissom of CSI, as Grissom originates within this very text itself, thus is a native fictional entity to the text he belongs in. By immigrants, what Parsons is referring to is a bit more complicated as immigrants are defined as objects that are coming from somewhere else. What Parsons is making here is clearly an intertextuality reference which can be, and by this work will be, adapted to the context of crossovers. For example, in the CSI-Without a Trace crossover (our favourite point of reference) when Jack Malone appears in the CSI episode of the two part story, his character's presence there can be categorized as an immigrant as the character is coming from a different text, namely Without a Trace of which Malone is a native of. Parsons' final category of objects, surrogate is explained as fictional counterparts of real objects, appearing either as

they are in real life or modified. What Parsons means here is what happens when actual objects make fictional appearances (either as they are, or modified as stated). For example a representation of Nikola Tesla (uncannily portrayed by the late David Bowie) makes an appearance in Christopher Nolan's peculiar movie *The Prestige*. In the movie, Tesla is supposed to be a representation of the actual historical figure with some of his features intact to the actual (such as his fondness of research regarding electricity and his ongoing feud with Thomas Edison) however, the narrative of the movie takes the liberty to modify the historical figure in a number of ways such as presenting him as having invented a borderline supernatural transportation machine, quite a modification indeed.

One may ask what Parsons' fictional object categorization has to do with crossovers. Quite a lot actually. With the general idea of a crossover being the appearance of entities of a fictional text in a another such discrete text, the situation clearly requires that some, at the very least one, participant(s) of the story (character or other entity such as an object, place, etc.) be coming from somewhere outside of it. But just as a family may decide to go out to get fresh air but may still technically remain in their own property if they only go out to their garden, a discussion is in order regarding how far out a fictional entity needs to go outside of the text it is native to for its migration to count as a crossover.

This work has previously mentioned Dolezel's (1998) argument of the three transfictional relationships that texts can have in between them. These were Expansion, Displacement/Modification and Transportation/Transposition. Let's cross reference some of these possible transfictional relationships by Dolezel with Parsons' list of object types in fiction.

Ryan (2013) sees the fictional entities of a text as a part of its static components. Indeed such an entity that is native to a specific text is original to that text as it does not come from somewhere else; it originates within the respective text. A story, all of

the existents of which are made up of objects and characters that are native to the text at hand can not constitute a crossover as it does not include any transfictional movement. However, transfictionality is not the sole determinant of a crossover either. The transfictional relationship of expansion is explained as expanding the time the narrative covers (Dolezel 1998, Freeman 2016) through filling gaps by adding to the narrative through prequels and sequels. And all narratives connected through a relationship of expansion share the same fictional reality, and in most cases these narratives are in direct succession to each other in the context of timeline and plot. For example, each of the remarkable 337 episodes of the CSI TV series share the same fictional reality, with each episode expanding the time that the narrative covers effectively. And Gil Grissom, among other characters appear in all, most or some of these episodes depending on the role of the character. However the recurring appearances of characters or other similar fictional entities do not constitute for crossovers as the said characters have originated within the series (text) thus remain of native state. They are not making migration movements, simply recurring or continual appearances. Surrogates, as fictional counterparts of actual entities (Parsons 1980) are not specifically migrating from somewhere either, as according to Pavel (1986), they are intentionally transformed by the writer for a purpose. While they are, to a point, signifiers meant to represent the actual signifieds in the real world to which they refer, they are ontologically, almost equally original to their texts as natives are. In that sense, surrogates are a proper fit to the transfictionality relation of modification/displacement which accounts for taking entities and writing them a speculative (and often counterfactual) story.

However the fictional object category of immigrants do fit very well in the context of crossovers. The immigrant in this sense is migrating between texts. And having underlined that recurring appearances of characters in their native texts and those that are connected to it via expansion is not migration, the migration of the immigrant fictional entities then are to destinations in which they are not natives of. In that

regard, such a movement in transfictionality context can be best accounted for the transfictionality relation of transportation/transposition. According to Dolezel (1980) transportation moves entities to a different setting while preserving the design and main story of the original. In a similar fashion, as previously stated, Proctor (2018) defines crossovers as characters, events and locations moving from their text, breaching the walls that separate one sub-world from another. Those "different" and "separate" are important adjectives here, an importance that connects to Deliu's (2015) argument that transfictionality assumes that multiple fictional worlds exist. All these adjectives that underline differentiation, a distinct standing, do actually refer to the original, separate standings of the texts in question; a connection between which then is of intertextuality. Freeman (2016) defines intertextuality as media texts existing and operating in relation to a series of other texts. And for the migrating object to not be simply a native recurring but a migrant visiting, the texts that the migrant is originating from and visiting must be separate works. Gil Grissom and Jack Malone belong in different texts for example, CSI and Without a Trace respectively which effectively makes their visits of each other's texts a good fit for a crossover.

#### **4.1.1.1 Exception of Continued Residence**

There is a rather interesting exception however which, as it is an occasion that occurs more and more frequently in the modern narrative discourses of the media industry, deserves special mention. An exceptional situation which allows for a fictional entity (let's refer to the entity as a character here to minimize confusion) to be an immigrant in a text that it originally originated in and thus was a native to.

One of the ways in which transfictionality relation of expansion can add to a fictional reality among prequels and sequels is a spin-off. Ryan (2008) refers to spin-offs as occasions in which secondary characters are turned into heroes of their own

stories. It is a very frequent practice in media production, as it makes practical and economic sense, to put further emphasis on and investment in supporting characters that the audience have come to love. Some most prominent examples can be found in television and comics such as charismatic X-MEN character Gambit (among other characters of Charles Xavier's team) getting his own comic title in which he stars and Angel, a supporting character in hit TV series Buffy the Vampire Slayer getting his own TV series eventually which ran alongside Buffy. For example Angel originated in and was a native of Buffy the Vampire Slayer TV series, however with getting his own spin-offs, his nativity (though not origination) has switched places. Similar to how a person may technically become a tourist in the country she/he was born in if the person has switched citizenship to another country, in the narrative equivalent of this situation, a character, now a native to its continued residence text that is the spin-off, may become the migrating visitor to the text it originated in and was native to. Thus it is possible to talk about crossovers that occurred between Angel and Buffy the Vampire Slayer TV series respectively. A notable exceptional situation that this work has termed *the exception of continued residence*.

**Figure 4.3:** Issue #1 Cover of the 1999 Spin-off Gambit Comic Title (left) and Buffy the Vampire Slayer-Angel Crossover (right)



Source: Marvel Comics (1999) Gambit #1, Buffy the Vampire Slayer Episode “Chosen” (2003).

Therefore, to summarize, for a crossover to occur, the narrative in question needs to be accommodating at the very least one fictional entity, origination and thus the nativity of which belongs to a different, distinct text than the other fictional entities involved in the narrative.

With all these dynamics thoroughly explained, it is clear that a narrative that includes fictional entities with distinct separate places of nativity and residence that have migrated through the transfictionality relation of transportation to participate in the story is a good fit to be called a crossover. But while such a condition required by **The Rule of Belonging** is a good indicator of a crossover, it is not the sole necessity, nor it is enough on its own to narrow the definition of crossovers as it would still leave the door open for narratives the nature of which are of too diverse a spectrum and may still result in one too many interpretations. In order to combat that, the Crossover Framework will present two further rules.

#### **4.1.2 The Rule of Consent**

Having established the necessity that a narrative must include fictional entities having migrated from their native texts via the transfictionality relation of transportation for the text to be counted as a crossover, then the exploration and the discussion of how such a movement can be made possible is required.

The recurring appearances of native fictional entities of a text is neither a surprising nor an ontologically complicated occasion as these entities already exist in the fictional reality of the respective text thus no extraordinary action need to be taken for these entities to continue their presences in that narrative. Surrogate entities on the other hand, as explained in the previous section, share a lot of common traits in the context of ontological standing with the native entities as while their referential roles might give them representative or intertextual meanings, they are also created for and thus in a relative way, native to the narratives in which they appear. However, immigrant fictional entities, thus crossover participants are a different matter entirely. These are fictional entities, for example characters, whose nativity, origination and continued residence are of different texts from the one they are to appear in through a narrative crossover. The distinct belongings and residences of these fictional entities are the very reason that a crossover is required for their participation in other texts. Then the question is of the migration movement that these entities must make in order to make their appearances in the crossover narrative, a specific kind of movement which this work has established that not only crosses over characters (entities) but also their respective fictional realities through them.

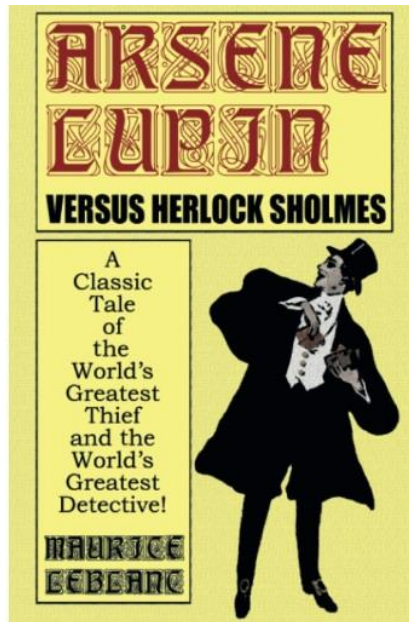
So can anyone just take fictional entities from their native texts by force and move them to any narrative of their choosing whatsoever and would such a random act then cross over characters as well as bringing their fictional realities with them? Well,



answering such questions with a simple yes is as conveniently easy as it is complicating, confusing for the understanding of crossovers in both academical and practitioner contexts. And moreover, while it was never theorized why; the history of fiction, criticism of its scholars and the perception of its audiences, intuitively have not accepted most narratives that have attempted to do so as crossovers, neither accepting the stories produced in result to the fictional realities of the relevant characters. Let's explore the situation through an example.

The peculiar case of Maurice Leblanc, the French novelist and the creator of Arsene Lupin may provide a good demonstration. Desiring a crossover between his character Arsene Lupin and Sherlock Holmes, Leblanc had written a short story including the two however when met with legal problems regarding his unauthorized use of Sherlock Holmes, he changed the name of the character in his story to Herlock Sholmes to avoid copyright issues. Leblanc later wrote additional stories including Lupin and Sholmes. However, even though these stories present a fictional reality of their own, the events depicted in these stories are not considered (fictionally) real for the character or the history of Sherlock Holmes as the confrontations between Holmes (or Sholmes) and Lupin are neither considered canon by dedicated followers nor by the related studies regarding Sherlock Holmes.

**Figure 4.4:** A Variant Cover of the Arsene Lupin and Herlock Sholmes Meet-up.



Source: LebLanc (2020).

The fact that Leblanc was not able to include Sherlock Holmes in his story as Sherlock Holmes but had to create a substitute with Sholmes and that the occurrences of this story, while being fictionally actual for Lupin, did not end up with a place in the fictional history, thus canon of Sherlock Holmes provide enough reason to question whether Leblanc's narrative was a crossover after all. What has occurred in this example was not a transfictional migration of Sherlock Holmes that brought along his fictional reality through transportation but the creation of a surrogate (Herlock Sholmes) by Leblanc in place of Holmes whom his character Lupin then could meet and interact with. Let's remember that Parsons had defined surrogates as fictional counterparts of real objects either as they are or modified (Parsons 1980). A slight adaptation of the concept for the context of crossovers can make way for an argument that in the very same way, surrogates can also be counterparts of fictional objects (entities like characters) that belong in different fictional realities. An

argument made stronger by Pavel's (1986) statement that surrogates are well designed dummies created for a narrative purpose by the writer. In the Lupin vs. Sholmes example, to substitute for the absent actual Shelock Holmes himself. But then why did Leblanc not cross over Sherlock Holmes for his story but had to make do with a surrogate? This brings us back to the question whether anyone can cross over any character as they would like. Apparently not, as proven by the very existence of one Mr. Herlock Sholmes. Because for a crossover, the participants need not be "taken" from their own fictional realities (native texts) but do need to "cross over" to the crossover story. There is almost a feeling of consent here on the part of the participating characters, entities. But how can that consent be given? Well, let's see.

Fictional narratives are after all real life productions of stories that take place in fictional realities. This being the case, while the objects of the stories be fictional, the artistic, legal and productional decision making processes regarding these narratives do occur in the real life where any such consent is thus sought. And to no surprise, fictional characters can not give real life consent. A problem at the very least, but one that an effective solution has been found for in the legal systems of our world. An analogy is in order here regarding the process of legal consent for those who need someone, a proxy per se, to decide whether or not to provide it in their behalf.

The predicament of the fictional characters in this context is very similar to how consent regarding legal matters are sought from children who are underage and thus not able to make legal decisions regarding their own. The law refers to this dynamic as parental consent laws and while specifics of the relevant law differ from one legal system, country to another, it generally covers the requirement that consent regarding whether minor children can engage in certain acts be sought from the child's parents, legal guardians. These laws protect both the child(ren) and the legal guardian(s) as they guarantee a parent's right to be informed of and consent (or not) to a number of matters such as medical treatments, educational decisions and contractual activities regarding the child (see Woods 2014 for more regarding parental consent law).

With the fictional characters (and other such entities) correlating with the role of the children in this analogy, the role of the parents who serve as the legal proxy for their children then belong to the authors or more precisely, especially in the eye of the legal system, to the owner of the intellectual property in question. Earlier, while exploring the dynamics of intellectual property ownership and related copyright relations, this work has established that the authority to determine fictional reality belongs exclusively to the holder of the respective intellectual property. And accordingly, by holding the authority to determine facts regarding a respective fictional reality and therefore regarding all the entities that belong in it, the holder of that authority also, by virtue, become the decisive factor regarding any and all consents that is sought in relation to those entities. The holder of the intellectual property is therefore not only the authority that decides how narratives regarding the fictional reality in question will move forward, but also of whether, and if to where, any entities of that fictional reality will migrate through transfictionality, thus cross over.

As to the legal side of this argument, the situation is quite clear. The previously detailed economic and legal rights provided and secured by copyrights give the author (or other such holder of the intellectual property) the right to object to any distortion or modification of their work (WIPO 2016). Such given rights allow for the intellectual property owners to prevent any others from using their artistic creations in other works and to pursue legal action to cease any unauthorized uses. Exactly what happened to Leblanc when he attempted to use Sherlock Holmes, a character on which he held no rights to legally use. On the moral side of the equation, in addition to the legality aspect, such dynamics also stress and underline the role of the author (or any other owner of the intellectual property) has as the decision maker regarding their fictional entities. The specific right provided by intellectual property ownership to prevent any distorted reproductions of the work, on the moral and ethical level also gives the right holder, the moral right to maintain the integrity of not only the

complete work but also of its building blocks. Building blocks such as the fictional entities that appear in a work of fiction. The author (or other rights holder(s)) of these entities may not desire for their entities, for example characters, depicted in certain ways or situations. And as unauthorized uses of these entities do portray them without the consent of the IP owner on the specifics of the portrayal, any such uses then become unofficial representations that do not effect the actual entity in question. Both Parkin and Proctor show the creator of a fictional work as the authority on definitive rulings regarding a fictional franchise (Parkin 2007, Proctor 2018), with Proctor further going on to argue the role that author approval has on validating authenticity. And without any ruling or approval gained from the involvement or consent of the intellectual property owner, any attempts to move entities between texts and representations that result from such actions do not relate to the actual fictional entities.

All these dynamics come to show that to facilitate the transfictional movement of a character (an immigrant) between distinct texts, then effectively for the notion of a crossover; the willingness on the side of the crossing character (entity) in the crossover; thus to get that, the consent of the intellectual property holder regarding the entities desired to be crossed over are required. As without the consent gained through such permission, it is not legally or morally, ethically possible to facilitate the migration movement of any fictional entity. Moreover as the power to determine facts regarding a respective fictional reality (and its entities) belongs to the authority who holds the intellectual property, without their cooperation, or at the very least a license obtained from them to operate with the fictional reality and its entities in question, it is again not legally or morally possible to determine any fictional reality in the desired context. There simply is very little to no point in an attempt to cross over, say Spider-Man, if you do not have the power to facilitate its transfictional movement (which effectively means that Spidey is not crossing over) or the authority to determine fictional reality regarding the said character (which would effectively

mean that any narratives produced without such authority holds no legitimacy regarding Spidey).

Having just mentioned Spider-Man; the legal agreement signed between Sony and Marvel which enabled the web slinger to enter Marvel's cinema franchise and participate in the occurring crossovers is a notable example showcasing the explained dynamic. The film rights to Spider-Man was sold by Marvel in 1985 and were eventually acquired by Sony. Sony produced several movies starring the beloved character including the original trilogy directed by Sam Raimi (with Tobey Maguire as Peter Parker) which solidified the popular position that superheroes enjoy on the silver screen. However when Marvel started producing their own movies, Spider-Man could not join the fold of characters appearing onscreen as his film rights had remained elsewhere. Eventually, in 2015, Marvel and Sony came to a legal agreement which allowed both to include the character in their own productions under certain terms while the film rights remained with Sony. However with the legal grounding related to the intellectual property in place, Spider-Man has since been appearing in Marvel crossover movies, enjoying a central role. Note that it was not possible for Marvel to include Spider-Man in any of the crossovers that they produced before this deal and only after the fact that they acquired the ability to determine fictional reality (in the context of cinema) regarding the web slinging wall crawler (for more on the deal between Sony and Marvel, see Lancaster 2015, Ching 2015).

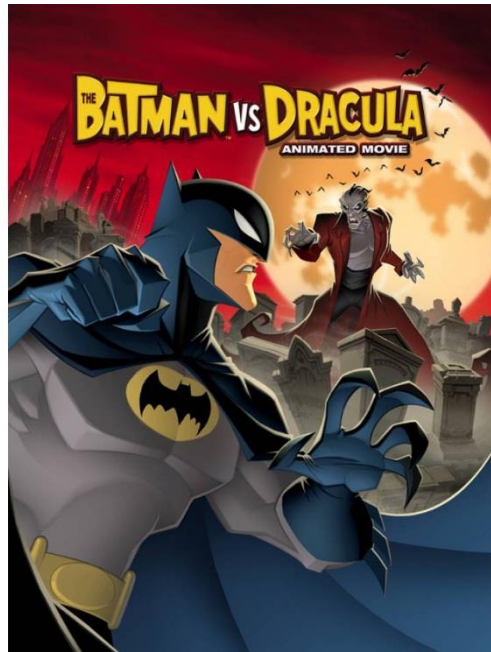
As the section above established that no actual transfictional movement of any fictional entities can occur without the consent of the authority that holds the right to determine fictional reality regarding them through the ownership of intellectual property, then any unauthorized appearance of characters (or other fictional entities) of distinct works in other works, that they are not native to, exclusively become employments of surrogates. After all, even though the transfictional movement of the actual entity may not occur, a text yet still may seemingly include the entity in question. This is often the case in works of fan fiction and other similar works that

are produced in unofficial standing. In such works, the appearing entities then are not transfictional migrants crossing over from their native texts but surrogate entities created by the specific text to fill in for the entities that are desired to appear in the narrative in question.

Surrogates however do not only appear in unofficial productions as it is a concept also often made use of by official productions of fictional texts which desire to include an intertextual element for which there either is not, or can not be consent. A great number of official texts include characters (not native to them) that have come to enjoy historical and cultural significance in fiction. Most such intertextual appearances are made legally possible through making use of the fact that works, copyrights of which has timed out do enter into public domain (for more on public domain see WIPO 2016). When a work enters public domain, its reproduction and in relation the commercial use of representations of its entities become possible without seeking legal consent. This is the very reason that a lot of fictional texts and franchises include their versions of cult characters inside them. The 2005 direct to TV/DVD animated movie *Batman vs. Dracula* is a good example for the case. It is clear from the animated feature that the Dracula appearing in the story is a modified version of William Harker's acclaimed character, transformed and adapted for the text/franchise at hand. A dynamic that is very well fitting to Parsons' definition of the surrogate fictional entity typology. Therefore while this surrogate representation is in reference to the original depiction of Dracula, it is however, again not the character itself that migrates from his native text but a specific surrogate version of the character, especially designed for the narrative purposes for which it will serve. This is the situation for two reasons. The first is the lack of consent for the transfictional migration of the character which has not been legally needed in this case as the character at hand is of public domain, yet a dynamic that effectively renders the Dracula that Batman fights not the actual Dracula but the version of him that exists in the fictional reality of this adaptation of Batman. And secondly as while the

producers of the Batman vs. Dracula are free as they desire to depict fictional reality regarding their surrogate Dracula, they simply do not hold any authority to determine fictional reality thus to depict any formal narratives regarding Harker's actual character.

**Figure 4.5:** Cover Art of the Batman vs. Dracula Animated Feature



Source: DC Comics (2005), The Batman vs. Dracula.

Therefore while official productions such as Batman vs. Dracula carry the overtone of a crossover, they actually are not as no character or entity technically crosses over for the production of the narrative. The only difference of such narratives from the completely unofficial productions is that, their official standing gives them the authority to determine fictional reality regarding some of the entities in the narrative. For example, while Dracula in the animated Batman vs. Dracula is a surrogate, the Batman in the narrative, because of its official standing, is the Batman, or at the very least is belonging to one of the variant fictional realities including the caped crusader.



To summarize, according to **The Rule of Consent**, for a narrative to qualify as a crossover; it needs to have the authority or to have secured the consent from that relevant authority to move the desired entities that are of different nativities, in accordance to **The Rule of Belonging**, from their native texts through the transfictional movement of transportation/transposition to the crossover story. It is the argument of this framework that, this is the only way so that the participating entities in the crossover are the actual entities coming from their original texts and not surrogates to fill in for them.

This previously untheorized dynamic can also be observed naturally in the media industry. While there are countless narratives that bring together various unrelated characters at their own unofficial capacity (as my bazaar found figure set did), the narratives that get their places carved in the industry and the appreciation of the audiences are those that actually satisfy the requirement of **The Rule of Consent**. The narrative authenticity of the CSI-Without a Trace crossover for example is made possible through the mutual consents given for the shows both of which were produced by Jerry Bruckheimer for the network CBS. Such official standing cements both CSI entities' movement to Without a Trace and those of Without a Trace to CSI vice versa as acts of transfictional migrations of the actual entities between these texts. Similarly, the box office wonders that are the Avengers movies, flagship crossover narratives of the cinema franchise that is referred as the Marvel Cinematic Universe, do enjoy their narrative authenticity again from the fact that all the participant entities in those movies are there not as surrogates but through transfictional migration. While on the other hand, the main villain of the 2004 comic adaptation movie Blade Trinity was again none other than Dracula. However even though Blade Trinity was a successful movie and a work of fiction that has resonated arguably well in the fan communities, the coappearance of the acclaimed vampire hunter and the famous vampire is neither culturally considered, nor referred to as a crossover. The Dracula there, for the very same reasons argued above, is not a

transfictional migration of the very character but a specific version, surrogate, that exists in the fictional reality in which Blade and his mentor Abraham Whistler exist.

#### **4.1.3 The Rule of Canon**

While the last rule regarded text authenticity, this current rule is one that is about text legitimacy. This work has extensively elaborated on the role of narrative canon as a timeline of events and occurrences that make up the historical component of a fictional reality in its dedicated section. It was also discussed in that section, at length, that canonicity is a quality of legitimate texts (Parker 2013), a quality; in connection to **The Rule of Consent**, made possible by the fact that canon texts are narratives produced by (or with the permission of) the powers that be that hold the authority to determine fictional reality regarding that specific fiction.

With the main approach of this work to its subject of interest being fictional reality, it is time again to examine the matter in that context. **The Rule of Consent**, required that the authority that can determine fictional reality regarding a fictional entity, participation of which is desired in a crossover, provide their consent so that the entity appearing in the narrative to be produced is not a surrogate but the actual entity crossed over to the crossover narrative through transfictional migration. And again, this work has argued and elaborated that fictional entities exist through the respective fictional realities in which they originate and do bring this fictional reality along with them in the event of a transfictional movement.

In that sense, fictional reality is of considerable importance in the context of a crossover as the fictional reality of a crossover, unlike a standalone narrative, not only relies in the fictional reality of the crossover narrative itself but also relies on the respective realities of its participants, all of which bringing their respective fictional realities along as an ontological side effect. When Grissom meets Malone for

example, each character come into the crossover with the realities of their background stories that were previously presented by the narratives of the respective series (texts) they come from. Unlike a surrogate fictional entity, which Parsons (1980) states that can be modified to differ from the actual entity that it signifies in any narrativistically convenient way, an actual entity coming from its native text through transfictional migration can not contradict to its original state by ontological reason because it is still bound and grounded by the same integrated fictional reality that legitimizes its relative actuality in its original text.

Therefore a transfictional intrusion of the fictional reality of one text to another necessitates loyalty to narrative continuity and with crossovers being affected by the fictional realities of all their participants; they also are ontologically necessitated not to contradict the respective continuities of these participants. For if a crossover contradicts the respective continuities of one or more of its participants, such an act would take away both from the credibility of the crossover story as well as causing cognitive dissonance, therefore doubt in its audience regarding the authenticity of the characters (or entities) crossing over, effectively breaking the clear connection that stood between the audience and the narrative; sustaining the suspension of disbelief. In the CSI-Without a Trace crossover for example, when Grissom and Malone meet, if Malone had been portrayed with a different backstory (such as having a different family, a different education, etc.) than that of his own from his native text, the audience would doubt whether this is the Jack Malone they know from Without a Trace. Similarly if Grissom was portrayed, even slightly, differently from his original in CSI, such as a difference in accent or clothing style, this would also create conflict as Ryan (2013) states that aesthetic illusion is equally compromised in texts that present micro-level contradictions as such situations distract readers considerably.

While crossovers, for the presentation of a successful narrative, are necessitated to stay loyal to the continuities of their participants; for continuities' sake and by ontological reason, the future respective narratives of the participants of a crossover

that succeed the crossover story should ideally and ontologically resume their continuities respectfully to the occurrences and facts depicted in the crossover. This is because, the component of fictional reality in the context of a crossover not only regards the fictional reality that is brought into the crossover by its participants but also regards the fictional reality they take out of it as the satisfaction of the Rule of Consent effectively guarantees that all the participants of a crossover are the actual fictional entities having migrated from their native texts for their participation in the crossover narrative and their brought-along fictional realities also grant the narrative of the crossover canonicity in regards to these participating entities.

The transfictional presences of the actual fictional characters (and other such entities) and the effect of the intrusion of their respective fictional realities in the crossover narrative, combined with the ability to determine fictional reality regarding these characters and entities through the satisfaction of **The Rule of Consent**, creates the necessity that a crossover narrative then not only generates a canon of its own but also adds to the respective narrative canons of its participants. According to Parker (2013), it is the function of official publications to document, maintain, update and distribute the official, in application version of the canon. Therefore, with a crossover narrative gaining canonical state for its participants, by causation, its occurrences gain canonical importance as well.

In accordance, if for example a certain character gets married in the events of a crossover, any statement by the individual stories of the respective character that take place after the crossover stating that the character was never married would be contradictory to the facts of fictional reality. Regarding the CSI-Without a Trace crossover, we know that the occurrences in each of the two TV episodes affected the fictional realities of and remained canonical for both parties involved as the narrative was able continue through mediums and texts with the memory of the occurrences and the facts depicted intact. Agent Malone's visit and the events that occurred in that episode of CSI remained of canon and remembered so that when Grissom visited

Without a Trace's next episode, everybody still did know and remember each other as well as the events that had occurred on the other series as they were able to pick up the investigation exactly where the previous episode had ended. A similar example of respecting the continuity of a crossover by its participants can be found in the crossover episodes between the Flash and Arrow TV series in which characters appear in the shows of each other frequently. When Flash receives the help of Arrow in a battle against his opponent Reverse Flash in his own show, Arrow tells him, after providing the required help that he might need the help of Flash sometime soon which actualizes in the form of Flash coming to the rescue of Arrow and a number of his allies in a later episode of Arrow. Therefore the events happened in the fictional reality of the crossover remained effective for the individual realities of its participating characters and therefore in the canons of both series.

Apart from the idea of ontological necessity that crossovers be canonical for their participants, such a dynamic also can be argued to resonate better with audiences as well as resulting in better critical reception. Two examples most clearly showcasing a correlation between crossover canonicity and positive reception can be Marvel's Secret Wars and DC Comics' Crisis on Infinite Earths, two comic book limited series that have pioneered the instance of major crossover events in contemporary narrative.

Secret Wars, published in 12 issues between May 1984 and April 1985 was a major crossover narrative which according to Jim Shooter, Marvel's chief editor, was conceived both as a response to the fans' long time demand to see a story with all the Marvel heroes and villains in it, as well as to serve as an original business idea for which toy manufacturer Mattel would produce toys in the theme of the series so that both Marvel and Mattel could generate revenue in cooperation (Shooter 2011). All the Marvel heroes and villains crossed over to the story in a way that would satisfy both the rules of Belonging and Consent, thus in the context of narrativity; the crossover narrative did not involve any surrogates but a great number of actual characters that have transfictionally migrated through the relation of transportation.

The narrative of Secret Wars, as a result was canonical for all the fictional entities participating in the crossover and remained canonical for the respective individual stories of these characters after the event. Secret Wars proved to be a fan favourite, receiving a very positive response from its readers, eventually becoming a best seller by selling more copies than any other comic did in the past 25 years (Dallas 2013). Furthermore, the comic series was especially praised by critics for its lasting effects on the Marvel universe and on the characters that participated in the crossover event (Esposito, Schedeen, Noris, Perez 2011, Zalben 2011). Secret Wars remains one of the most iconic crossover (or in fact any comic) narratives to this very day.

On the other side, DC Comics' Crisis on Infinite Earths was a similarly 12 issue limited series, published between April 1985 and March 1986. Unlike the fan serving and revenue generating aims of its Marvelian rival, Crisis on Infinite Earths was designed to serve a more fundamental purpose for its company. The fictional universe depicted by DC Comics had become very complicated over the decades since its conception and the coexisting, often contradicting storylines which had morphed into a multiverse concept had started to cause difficulty both in terms of maintaining canon for production and was continually causing audience confusion. It was accordingly the proposition of Marv Wolfman, a DC writer who eventually went on to write the Crisis story, to bring the DC Comics universe and its titles into a single universe and canon through a major crossover event in which all the DC characters and titles would participate (Tucker 2017, Goldstein 2006). Crisis on Infinite Earths was again a narrative that satisfied the rules presented by this work so far and thus is canonical in nature for its participants. The Crisis storyline eventually did what it was meant to do and brought the entire DC Comics titles into a single universe and made it possible for the company to maintain a singular canon. The narrative, events of which was canonical for all the participants involved, had such a major effect on the DC Comics titles involved that after the completion of its narrative, the DC Comics history was conceptualized with the division of pre-Crisis and post-Crisis eras.

Similarly to the situation with Secret Wars, Crisis on Infinite Earths was both a commercial (see Tucker 2017) and critical (see Siegel 2017, Friedenthal 2011) success.

**Figure 4.6:** Respective First Issue Covers of Marvel's Secret Wars (left) and DC Comics' Crisis on Infinite Earths



Source: Marvel, DeFalco (1984) & DC Comics, Wolfman, Giordano (1985).

Having mentioned the importance of the canonical state of a crossover narrative, it would also be most productive to explain the ontological complications that can arise from a situation in which a crossover narrative breaks the canon(s) of its participants. As stated before, for ontological reason, a crossover must carry on the canon(s) of its participating entities for as long as those entities are considered to be the actual entities having crossed over from their native texts for the narrative in question and not surrogate stand-ins. For if a narrative breaks the known continuity of a fictional entity and its reality, it effectively disturbs the constant that is a timeline, thus a narrative canon. Such a situation, at the very least, compromises the authenticity of the entity/reality in question and/or the legitimacy of the text in regards to its participating entities. Ryan and Thon (2014), argue that narrative conception can be either logical or imaginative. In their argument, they claim that for logical conception

to occur, a narrative must always stay true to the previously given facts because if contradiction occurs, then a new reality becomes of question. They also state however a rather loose approach in imaginative conception in which they argue that a reality can be considered involving certain named entities, traits and specific properties of which may differ from text to text. For a crossover narrative to be canonical and a continuation to and a part of the narratives of its participants who are there through transfictional migration, it must employ the logical conception of staying loyal to the previously provided facts so that the narrative does not contradict the fictional realities brought into it by its participants. However, a narrative can also choose to disregard all that.

An example can be the 2003 movie, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. This movie and the comic series of the same name from which it was adapted are often shown as examples of crossover narratives as the series include a large number of prominent characters from classic literature and popular culture such as Dorian Gray, Captain Nemo, Tom Sawyer and James Bond. This work will argue however that there are several problems with defining *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (comics or movie) as a crossover, the first and the major of which is that the narrative of this text does not satisfy **The Rule of Consent** as the many intertextual characters in its stories are put together, making use of the fact that most of these characters are rather old and that their use had become public domain. Therefore the text in question does not hold any authority to determine fictional reality regarding most, if not all, these characters. The representations of most of these characters in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* also differ remarkably in several ways from the way these characters are depicted and described in their native, original texts. The problem of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* in the context of canon is that, as this work previously mentioned, participating characters bring their own realities into a crossover; for characters, eventual futures of whom are known through their respective stories, this is also applicable in the sense that various aspects about their



future after the crossover may be known as well. Therefore any events occurring in the crossover story which would prevent the eventual occurrences of their known future would be contradictory for the consistency and canon of the respective characters. In the said movie, this is the case for Dorian Gray, the eventual circumstances of the death of whom is known from Oscar Wilde's original work, in The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen movie however, Dorian Gray dies and his death is depicted considerably different than the one described by Wilde which is considered to be the fictional reality for Dorian Gray. Therefore the factual contradictions that the narrative of The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen include regarding Dorian Gray and other involved characters in terms of canon compromises both the legitimacy of the occurrences of the text in regards to the supposedly crossed over characters as well as the authenticity of the characters involved. Such a dynamic, by ontological reason effectively renders the text not a crossover narrative of these characters but one that involves surrogate substitutes referencing to intertextual characters and a narrative by imaginative conception that does not add to the canon(s) of the supposed participants but creates one of its own.

**Figure 4.7:** A Counterfactual to the Original Dorian Gray Appearing in The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen Movie.



Source: The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003), 20th Century Fox.

To summarize, by introducing **The Rule of Canon**; it is the proposition of this framework that a crossover narrative must be of canonical state for its participants. As, if the participating fictional entities in a crossover narrative are meant to be the transfictional migrations of distinct fiction entities of different nativities, their fictional reality, by ontological reason travels with them to the crossover narrative. Therefore with their fictional realities intact and in effect, the crossover narrative then becomes of equal ontological standing with the standalone narratives of these participants, thus must be of same canonical importance. If however, a crossover narrative does not respect the prior (or future, if known) continuities of its participants, it compromises the authenticity of its participants, effectively risks rendering them surrogates. Similarly so, if the events and the facts presented in the crossover narrative are not considered as occurred, canonical by the respective standalone narratives of the crossover's participants that succeed the crossover, such a situation then again effectively diminishes the validity and legitimacy of the crossover narrative in regards to its participants. A singular, cohesive canon and an emphasis on maintaining such a construct has become the defining point of fictional franchises and a demand of fan communities (Parker 2013), as a result, in the media industry and the cultural scene of our day, it has become not only an ontological, philosophical necessity but also an almost standard expectation that a narrative, a crossover narrative in even a heightened sense, maintains narrative canonicity.

#### **4.1.3.1 "What-If" Scenarios**

There also is the need to elaborate on the dynamic of an exceptional variation of crossovers that satisfy the rules of Belonging and Consent and thus the narratives of which include the transfictional migration of fictional entities from their distinct native texts, however that do not satisfy the Rule of Canon, intentionally choosing not to be of canonical state for their participants.

These are crossovers that deal with "what if" scenarios, stories of which do not become canon with such works remaining standalone narratives (Reynolds 1994). Because these are official narratives, satisfying **The Rule of Consent**, they actually do hold authority on determining fictional reality regarding their participants, however while their participants may bring their respective fictional realities into the narrative, they certainly do not take away any effects of the events in these crossovers as the acting fictional reality of such narratives are contained within. Parker (2013) define these type of texts as narratives that are either removed or intentionally not added to the effective canon(s) as such texts are incompatible with the main canon.

Such titles are often less serious in nature and deal with non-critical issues such pitting unrelated characters in a race or fight for the amusement of the fanbases of both characters involved. However, What-If kind of crossover examples of more serious nature are also possible to find. Such texts often deal with speculative stories of how well known fictional events that have earned wide fan appreciation could have played out alternatively. While such titles carry a more serious overtone, they remain of speculative representations and are only considered as alternative re-imaginings of the canonical events which they speculate about.

Alternatively, What-If approach sometimes also provides content creators with an opportunity to execute crossover narratives, canonical state of which could be ontologically problematic for their participants. Such narratives, while remaining outside of the canon of their participants, might present a diverging canon of their own, allowing for the crossover story to be revisited, sequeled for, while the occurrences in the narrative being of no effect for the respective fictional realities, thus to the standalone narratives of their participants. Several examples for such kind of narratives can be found in recent video games of the fighting genre in which having guest star characters from different franchises have become very popular. In such a way, STAR WARS characters like Yoda and Starkiller are integrated into the narrative of the hit fighting game series Soul Calibur while characters from various

popular franchises such as Robocop, Terminator, Spawn and Rambo have appeared in Mortal Kombat games. While appearances of these characters are effective for the narratives of these games, in the sequels of which their participation may be remembered, these appearances remain within the standalone reality of these games and do not transfer to the main in-effect canons of these characters.

Crossover narratives dealing with What-If scenarios are therefore exceptional situations as their "what if" quality, effectively their fictional unreality for the canons of their participant entities is stated and stressed.

#### 4.1.4 Crossover Qualification: 3 Rules of Election

With each of the three rules that the Crossover Framework presented as the normative qualification criteria a work of narrative fiction must satisfy to be defined as a crossover, it would be of value at this point to very briefly summarize each rule and to demonstrate crossover qualification of an example narrative.

**Table 4.1:** Crossover Qualification Criteria Summarized

<p><b>The Rule of Belonging:</b> For a crossover to occur, the narrative in question needs to be accommodating at least one fictional entity, origination and the nativity of which belongs to a distinct text, different from the other fictional entities involved.</p>
<p><b>The Rule of Consent:</b> For a narrative to qualify as a crossover; it needs to have the authority (or to have secured the consent from the relevant authority) to move the desired entities that are of different nativities from their native texts through transfictional movement to the crossover story, as well as to determine fictional reality regarding them.</p>
<p><b>The Rule of Canon:</b> For a narrative to qualify as a crossover; it must be of canonical state for its participants. If however the narrative is meant especially not to be of canonical state for its participants, then its speculative nature must be stressed.</p>

The three rules of crossover qualification are listed in their order of priority importance. **The Rule of Belonging** takes precedence over **The Rule of Consent** which is prioritized over **The Rule of Canon**. It is the systematic recommendation of the Crossover Framework that a narrative is scrutinized regarding its conformity to these rules, in their successive order, to reach the most healthy determination whether the narrative in question is a crossover.

It would be most effective at this point to test a narrative including intertextual elements with the elect of the three rules to see whether the narrative in question qualifies as a crossover according to the Crossover Framework. And lets keep focusing on the very example that this work has opened with; the famed meeting of Gil Grissom and Jack Malone.

**Table 4.2:** Crossover Qualification Criteria Applied to the CSI-Without a Trace Example

<p><b>The Rule of Belonging:</b> In the CSI part of the narrative, the visiting fictional characters such as Jack Malone belongs to a different, distinct text; Without a Trace, where their nativities lie. In the very same way, in the second part of the narrative that takes place in Without a Trace, this time the visitors, Grissom is from CSI where he is native to. With these concurring foreign native natures of the visitors, effectively, the narrative satisfies the rule of belonging.</p>
<p><b>The Rule of Consent:</b> The CSI-Without a Trace storyline is an official production with both the consent and the involvement of CBS and Jerry Bruckheimer who produced both series. With the narrative produced by the very holders of the intellectual properties in question, this situation effectively provides the narrative the authority to move the fictional entities and their relevant fictional realities through transfictional transportation as well as to determine fictional reality regarding them. Therefore, the narrative also satisfies the rule of consent.</p>

**The Rule of Canon:** With the narratives taking place in the respective mediums of both series participating and taking into consideration the fact that the episodes of these series in which the CSI-Without a Trace storyline occur have no lesser ontological standing than any other episode of these series, the events remain canonical for either show. A situation also supported by the fact that the narrative was able to resume in Without a Trace, exactly where it was left in CSI, showing that the events of the narrative are remembered and are considered as occurred in the respective fictional realities in question. Accordingly, the narrative satisfies the rule of canon.

With the CSI-Without a Trace narrative satisfying each of the successive three rules of crossover qualification, its narrative can be defined as a crossover, as can any other such narrative which can satisfy these requirements accordingly.

But what about narratives that include fictional entities, characters of different texts yet that do not satisfy one, or some of the three rules. The Crossover Framework will now propose an alternative label for works that are of similar appearance yet do not satisfy these requirements and elaborate on its narrativistic and ontological reasoning for the differentiation.

#### **4.1.5 "Collage" As An Alternative Label**

It is possible that a narrative can bring several characters (or other fictional entities) of different nativities together in unofficial capacity. While such a narrative, would satisfy **The Rule of Belonging** through the different and distinct originations and residences of the appearing characters (entities), these type of narratives do not satisfy the rules of Consent (as they include fictional entities, intellectual properties of which

belong to other authors or companies, without their permission and/or contribution) and Canon (as while such a work would present a fictional reality of its own, that reality neither transfers, nor is recognized by the fictional realities of the participating characters).

To be able to referentially differentiate these types of crossover-like narratives from actual crossovers, different terminology is in order. In accordance, it is the proposition of this framework that such works might be better defined with the term *collage*; the meaning of which, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is "a work of art that is made by attaching pieces of different materials to flat surface". A meaning exactly applicable to the context at hand as in an unofficial crossover-like narrative, the author of the work, instead of crossing over characters from their native texts through permission and arrangement, attaches a self-made portrayal, representation of them into his own work in their own personal capacity.

In the previous sections, this work has established that the crossing over of an actual fictional entity can only be of question if a textual migration of the entity through the transfictional relation of transportation does occur. And in relation, this work has also established that such a transfictional movement can not occur without the will or the consent of the authority that holds the ability to consent for and determine fictional reality regarding the fictional entity in question. And as such consent through permission or the contribution of such an authority is not of the question in collages, as stated before, then the appearing fictional entities are not the actual fictional entities crossing over from their native texts, but they are surrogate entities created for the narrative to substitute for the actual fictional entities they represent. On the very essence, the fact that no fictional entities do cross over in the context of narrative technicality in collages in itself provides enough ground that a different term is needed and that these types of narratives are different from crossovers.

Collage narratives come in numerous different shapes and are of various productional capabilities as well. The most frequent examples of this narrative typology are present in fanfiction where artistic individuals produce narratives in respect to the fictional texts and franchises which they admire. While fanfiction usually regards the stories produced in unofficial capacity in regards to a single distinct narrative (such as a famous novel, movie, fictional franchise), these kind of narratives can also become collages if they involve characters that intertextually refer to more than one distinct fictional realities, texts. Examples of such texts of fanfiction collages can vary from a story that brings unrelated characters together (let's say Lara Croft, The Tomb Raider goes on an exploration trip with Indiana Jones) written for personal amusement to unofficial relatively high-budget public productions such as the video contents produced by Machinima on Youtube which pits various well known characters against each other in combat (such as Batman vs. Darth Vader of STAR WARS). It also must be noted however, that the classification of collage is not limited to fanfiction. Major studio productions can belong in the collage classification as well. For example, the previously mentioned The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen comics and the movie are both good fits for the collage category.



**Figure 4.8:** A Machinima Production for Youtube Pitting Batman Against Darth Vader



Source: Machinima (2014).

The intertextual fictional entities in collages also deserve scrutiny in terms of narrative ontology. Going back to Parsons' (1980) typology of fictional entities, unlike the immigrant fictional entities which come from a different location (text), surrogates are the same or modified counterparts in reference to another entity. And connecting Parsons' typology, again to Dolezel's (1998) transfictionality relation types; unlike immigrant entities that migrate through the transfictional relation of transportation, surrogate entities are better fitting to the displacement/modification relation which according to Dolezel is the act of taking characters/setting of a fictional world and writing them a new story. In this sense, the combination of the notions of surrogate entity and the relation of displacement provide for a dynamic in which narratives that do not affect the actual fictional entities of their supposed participants (such as collages) do create substitute fictional entities and write them a new story. Dolezel states that narrative acts of displacement in most cases provide

counterfactual sequence of events in regards to characters they refer to and that these kind of narratives deal with speculative scenarios (Dolezel 1998). This dynamic effectively accounts for the narrative situations in which collages depict stories regarding their versions of the fictional characters which they include that contradict the effective fictional realities, main canons of the original versions of these entities, such as the situation regarding the death of Dorian Gray in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* movie which was counterfactual to the canonical death of the character in his native text by Oscar Wilde. The ontological ability to depict such counterfactual narrative facts is made possible through the fact that the intertextual characters in collages are not crossed over fictional entities but surrogates for which the depictions that are counterfactual to the actual fictional entity become canonical of their own.

Surrogate fictional entities therefore are always of the case regarding the intertextual entities in collage narratives. Returning to *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, this time the comics, in the last volume, the character Jimmy is present, who is described, but never explicitly stated, to be James Bond. However his name is not used as, unlike the majority of characters in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series the use of whom has become public domain, the use of James Bond would require copyright. And the inability to even use the name of the character that is desired to be crossed over and the use of resembling names (in this case as well as in the case with Herlock Sholmes) simply means that the work in fact did not cross over the specific character mentioned (Sherlock Holmes or James Bond in these cases) but created a substitute of its own, which needed no crossing over anyway. However, while the use of these anagrams and referral names are shown as examples by this work to showcase the fact that collages include not immigrant characters but surrogates, it must be underlined that the use of the exact names of the actual characters would not have resulted in a different situation either. As transporting a fictional entity from its own native text to a different narrative requires not only

matching use of names but also the dynamics that satisfying the three rules of crossover qualification account for. Therefore regardless whether the collage narrative is a fanfiction story written by a keen individual or an unofficial movie production, in both cases, lacking the ability to cross over the actual entities in question and the authority to determine fictional reality regarding them, these narratives substitute for the fictional realities and their entities which they desire to produce stories about with a fictional reality of their own and surrogate entities to serve as virtual counterparts of the entities they refer to.

Interestingly, because the fictional reality of an actual fictional character of which the surrogate refers to does not transfer to the collage narrative (as there is no transfictional transportation), the background of the character in question (the surrogate) is not ontologically filled by a fictional reality that precedes the collage narrative (unlike a crossover; think of Grissom's background that automatically transfers to *Without a Trace*) but is filled in for by the audience. While immigrant characters do cross over with their interwoven fictional realities intact, surrogates are empty shells, but as they are signifiers to a signified; they, even by appearance alone convey some meaning for the audience. Intertextuality supposes that meaning does not transfer directly from the writer to the reader but is mediated through the writer and the reader by other texts (Kristeva 1980). Similarly, Thomas Pavel (1986) states that intertextuality is of question if the meaning is sought with or of other texts. Therefore even though Herlock Sholmes in the *Lupin* novels or Jimmy in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* are not the transfictional migrations of the actual characters (Sherlock Holmes and James Bond, respectively) but surrogates to fill in for them, through their appearances, names and roles in the story, the audience get a feel for who they are representing and do fill in the blanks accordingly. All cultural content carries an in-built educational requirement (Gans 1999), and this very dynamic that is the general cultural knowledge of the audience regarding fictional texts and their characters, entities, enable surrogates to act in proxy to the very

fictional characters of whom they duplicate.

A collage, therefore is a fictional narrative with seemingly intertextual entities, that does not satisfy the three rules of crossover qualification presented by this framework. The inability of a narrative to satisfy the three criteria rules shows that it does not include transfictionally crossed over entities but it has created surrogates for these entities of its own and pasted them together, a notion from where the analogy of the very term "collage" come from. While collages are not of equal ontological standing to crossovers, this work underlines with utmost respect that works defined by the proposition of this framework as collages are works of fiction with their own presented realities and artistic qualities. The differentiation proposition of this work, then, is to make a better definition of what is and what is not a crossover as such a definition had not been exhaustively made beforehand in the literature.

A final mention on the importance of making the crossover and collage differentiation is also in order. Even though the difference between these two types of narrative texts might seem like a nuance at first, the narrativistic and ontological implications in relevance to either narrative types are, as explained in detail, remarkably major. Seemingly similar narrative acts, the differences in ontological technicality between crossovers and collages and the importance in making the theoretical differentiation for both academic as well as practically artistic contexts can be argued to be similar to how whales, while seemingly similar to fish, are need to be correctly categorized as mammals for accurate scientific inquiry. In the very same manner, while it might be convenient to call all such similar narratives as crossovers, as noted before, the all inclusive use of the term halts the narrative study of the notion as well as creating confusion in the terminology and progress of narratology.

With crossovers narrowly defined via the three rules of crossover qualification and the collage differentiation made, it is now time to explain and differentiate several other similar narrative dynamics that are often mistaken for crossovers.

#### **4.1.6 Cameos**

A popular narrative act of the contemporary cultural scene, a cameo can refer to several different phenomena. As a term, cameo means a small but notable role (Ehrlich 2019). Cameos are occasions in which real life entities make appearances in fictional context beside fiction-specific entities. Trivial appearances of real life celebrities in movies for example fall into this category, as does brief "passing by" appearances by fictional characters belonging to other texts. Even though such meet-ups do seem to carry the overtone of a crossover, the case is not exactly so but a rather nuanced one. For a healthy examination, this work will divide cameos into those by real entities and fictional entities.

##### **4.1.6.1 Cameos by Real Entities**

A lot of fictional texts, in various media, contain cameo appearances by real life celebrities and public figures. Bettridge regards these as occasions in which a famous face shows up for a surprise part of onscreen action and reminds that in such occasions, celebrities either might be playing the role of themselves or portraying a fictional character (Bettridge 2020). Usually occurring in movies (because of the visual convenience of the medium for delivering the surprise appearance), such cameo appearances do not fall into the category of crossovers.

In such an occasion when a famous figure portrays a fictional character, what separates their presence in the narrative from other actors/actresses is the surprising nature of their appearance. For example, singer Ed Sheeran appears as a Lannister soldier in an episode of Game of Thrones TV series. What separates Sheeran's presence there from any other normal actor that could have played the role is that Ed Sheeran is a known figure, the difference of whose artistic identity as a singer and cultural acclaim makes him an unlikely candidate to appear in such a (small, acting)

role. In these kind of situations, no crossover of any kind is of the question whatsoever because there is no transported entity. Ed Sheeran is not there as the singer he is, he simply is portraying a fictional character as do all actors and actresses whose identities as the actors and actresses they are disappear into their roles, replaced by the identities of the characters they are portraying in that fiction. Additionally, Ehrlich (2019) mentions that sometimes, such celebrity cameos may convey metatextual meanings, like the habit of some film directors to make cameo appearances in their own movies in small roles. It is possible to see M. Night Shyamalan and Martin Scorsese appear in various roles in movies in which they have directed, for example in *The Signs* and *Taxi Driver* respectively.

It is however also possible that celebrities might not portray a fictional character but may appear as themselves in fictional texts and then with a person from the real world appearing in a fictional setting, it is easier to wonder whether such appearances can be categorized as crossovers. Cameos of this nature are again quite common in TV series and movies. For example, Michael Bloomberg, the actual former mayor of New York City appeared on *Law and Order* as the mayor of NYC. In similar fashion, it is possible to find cameos made by American TV personality Carmen Electra in *House M.D.*, supermodel Karolina Kurkova in *Person of Interest* and famed boxer Mike Tyson in *Creed* (a movie of the *Rocky* franchise) just to name a few. And even though the intrusion of real world entities into specific fictional realities are of the question in these examples, such cameos can not be categorized as crossovers either. Crossovers regard the in-fiction meeting of fictional entities belonging to different texts, however in these cameos mentioned above; the visitor is of the real actuality. Pavel states that there stands a solid border between the real and the fictional worlds however the borders between respective fictional worlds are not so solid at all times and can prove to be crossable (Pavel 1986) as in cases of crossovers. Thus, unlike crossovers in which characters from seemingly separate worlds can cross into those of each other, in these cameos, the cameo making entity does not make a literal

crossing of the border between the actual and the fictional but an embodiment of the actual entity is of case in the fictional realm. Therefore, a crossing over of the actual entity is not of question but simply, again, a surrogate dynamic occurs in which a fictional version of the actual entity appears alongside the fiction-specific entities of the text. Let's remember that Parsons' original description for surrogate fictional entities was as fictional counterparts of real objects (Parsons 1980). But by the causation of an ontological side effect, with such a cameo in the canon of the series, the Karolina Kurkova that Detective Fusco meets in the Person of Interest shows that (a) Karolina Kurkova that is as similar as portrayed to her real self also exists in that fictional reality.

**Figure 4.9:** Supermodel Karolina Kurkova Making a Cameo Appearance in the Person of Interest TV Series, Meeting Detective Fusco



Source: Person of Interest Episode "Prisoner's Dilemma" (2013), Kilter Films, CBS.

#### **4.1.6.2 Cameos by Fictional Entities**

When a fictional entity makes a cameo appearance in a fictional text however, a crossover is more possible to be the case. To start with, for an appearance by a fictional entity to be considered a cameo appearance, it is again necessitated (as in crossovers, see Rule of Belonging) that the appearing entity is of a different nativity in the context of textuality. Because otherwise the entity in question would just be a native entity to the fiction at hand who/which just has a brief role in the narrative. It is again a notion of transfictionality that is at play that differentiates the phenomena as a cameo. Proctor (2018) considers a brief appearance of an intertextual character as a transfictional cameo and argues that such an event means that the appearing entity exists in the same narrative space, thus the same fictional reality. In that sense, the cameo dynamic carries the possibility to account for a transfictional migration of a fictional entity.

Then, the matter becomes determining whether a specific instance of a cameo appearance of a fictional entity constitutes a crossover. This framework will propose that the way to determine this narrative question is possible by referring to the three rules of crossover qualification previously presented by this work. If the cameo in question does satisfy the criteria set of the presented qualification rules; it can be defined as a crossover instance, if not however; the intertextual nature of the cameo can be better explained with a surrogate dynamic, better fitting the collage definition.

The final point of elaboration needed regarding this matter is, especially in situations in which a cameo might be considered as an act of crossover, clarifying the difference in terminology between a crossover and a cameo. Returning to Ehrlich's cameo definition as a small but notable role (Ehrlich 2019) and comparing this statement by the cultural understanding of cameo appearances, the difference then can be argued to be that a cameo is a small, rather insignificant intertextual reference in terms of narrative and plot progression. A good example can be the appearance of



Captain America's shield in the movie *Iron Man 2*, in which the fictional object appears literally out of nowhere, surprises the audience, makes an intertextual connection and its presence in the story is more trivial than fundamental. While this specific example of intertextual appearance satisfies the three rules of crossover qualification, it can better be categorized as an example of a cameo instead of a crossover because of the small nature and the relative lack of narrative importance of this transfictional migration. If Captain America had appeared himself though and was an integral part of the narrative, as he does in a successive movie of the franchise, *The Avengers* which is a good example of a crossover narrative, the significance and the size of the transfictional occasion would exceed cameo capacity.

To summarize, cameos that satisfy the rules of crossover qualification can be shown as mini acts of crossovers. They are small but interesting intertextual references in which the transfictional entity does not have a starring role unlike in a crossover but makes a brief appearance, often of surprising nature to the audience.

#### **4.1.7 Licensed Merchandising**

Another misconception that proves to be a recurring one in the academic literature is mistaking acts of commercial licensing and merchandising for fictional crossovers. For example, it is possible to find occasions in academic literature in which things such as a *Star Wars* themed Monopoly set to be shown as examples to a crossover.

Merchandising is the marketing practice of utilizing a specific brand/image to sell certain products. Trademarked assets are often licensed with the permission, or by the direct production, of the intellectual property owners to generate additional revenue (for more on intellectual property licensing, see Raysman, et. al. 1999). Merchandising is a commercial enterprise that has a close relationship to fictional storytelling. Fictional franchises and their characters have a tendency to become

cultural symbols and such symbols in relation have the tendency to increase the sales of products designed in their themes and likenesses, resulting in lucrative endeavors for both manufacturers and the original intellectual property owners who receive revenue from these sales. This dynamic can be showcased using the 2015 and 2016 data of sales figures from toy manufacturers Hasbro and Mattel, the 40 to 45 percent of the respective sales of which are accounted for by their licensed products of fictional superheroes. Lego is another manufacturer with a fondness of licensing, which produces themed sets of franchises such as STAR WARS, Avengers, Batman, Spider-Man and Harry Potter via licensing agreements and is known to be generating revenue from these products that rival the box office income of some of these franchises themselves (Loftus 2017). It is also a common licensing practice to produce various goods using the names and visual themes of various franchises such as James Bond themed timepieces by Swatch or apparel lines especially designed for fans of superhero franchises (see Crooms 2020).

**Figure 4.10: Two Examples of Licensed Merchandising: A STAR WARS Monopoly set (left) and James Bond Themed Swatch Watches (right)**



Source: Hasbro (2021), Swatch (2020).

Even though there are "meetings" of well know names, icons here such as Batman meets Lego or James Bond & Swatch, STAR WARS and Monopoly,, these gettogethers obviously do not account for crossovers as they are not of narrative nature. A crossover is a meeting point of two (or more) distinct fictional texts and for a crossover to occur, the meeting needs to be in fictional setting, in the context of a narrative. The out of fiction occasions in which several fictional entities or fictional entities and other iconic brands/concepts are brought together therefore does not constitute as crossovers.

It must be noted that another cause for confusion is that the term crossover has also been utilized in various marketing contexts in the commercial industry as of late. It is not extremely uncommon that the term is used to refer to occasions in which the use of one thing has transferred to another area. In automotive industry for example, there is a vehicle type that is categorized as crossover which refers to automobiles that are designed to be a combination of touring cars and SUVs. In this regard, the differentiation that must be made here is the one that stands between the term used to refer to a narrative crossover and the term used in commercial contexts. While the

difference seems clear intuitively, the misconception occurs frequently in the current academic literature, therefore this section was deemed fit to be included in this framework in order to provide clarity.

## **4.2 CROSSOVER COMPATIBILITY: POSSIBLE WORLDS**

In the previous sections, this framework has extensively elaborated on the qualities of the concept of fictional reality and the fictional worlds (and their inhabitant entities) the existence of which are governed by their respective fictional realities. It is time now to talk about the quantity of fictional worlds. This work has previously mentioned Thomas Pavel's argument that there existed not always solid borders between respective fictional worlds (Pavel 1986) and Deliu's statement that the notion of transfictionality, by nature presupposed the existence of multiple fictional worlds (Deliu 2015). Both of these statements argue that beyond the actual and fictional discrimination, there exists a deeper quantification within the category of fictional.

As readers (an audience) experience a fictional text, they, as explained previously while elaborating on the perceptual level of fictional reality, create a cognitive construct of the fiction in question. However it would be awful superficial to expect this interpretational construct to be a one time occasion in which a single cognitive response is created to facilitate all fictions that are to come after the fact. In an analogy, in response to the first fictional text encountered, a reader does not build a box which is meant to hold all the fiction to come after it, but they build the first of many boxes that are to store the respective interpretations of the multiple fictional texts to come, a box for each new text that demands its own box. And such a dynamic is quite important as fiction tends to come in many shapes and sizes. Fiction comes in the form of worldly romantic interactions between a peculiar young couple in movies *Before Midnight* and *Before Sunset* but fiction also comes in the form of the mighty Avengers assembling with their superpowers to protect our planet from alien dangers.

Different boxes are needed indeed.

This is to say that people do not only make the actual-fictional distinction but also intuitively and/or consciously separate distinct fictional texts from each other as necessary. In an original experiment, Skolnick and Bloom show both 5 years old children and adults, pictures of Batman, Robin and SpongeBob and ask them whether these characters consider each other to be real or make-believe (see Skolnick & Bloom 2006). The response they get show that both children and adults think that Batman would consider Robin to be real but SpongeBob to be make-believe, effectively proving that people attribute mental states to fictional characters to make sense of fiction. Skolnick and Bloom, interpret their findings to argue that both children and adults do not assume all fictional characters to belong in the same world and that people expect only the characters that they believe to exist in the same world to be able to interact while expecting those that exist in different worlds not to be able to do so. Ryan and Thon (2014) also support the conception of multiple fictional realities, worlds as they mention the mental effort of the audiences to conceptualize fictional domains.

In addition, Ryan (2013) further discusses and questions whether worlds projected in various different incarnations of franchises such as Matrix or The Lord of The Rings present the same storyworld or just similar ones. For example it is very possible to find so many incarnations and interpretations of the character Batman. If the iconic movies of the character are scrutinized; from examining the characters and continuity, it is possible to argue that the respective two movies directed by Tim Burton and Joel Schumacher share the same fictional reality thus presenting narratives about the same world. However the later trilogy of movies directed by Christopher Nolan is a reboot as the storyline and characters of these movies clearly do not follow the continuity of the previous movies but take the franchise elsewhere. Martin (2009) argues reboots to be extreme acts of retcon, retroactively effective diverges from canon, with the intention to create a new one. Therefore the

Burton/Schumacher movies and the Nolan trilogy take place in different worlds governed by different fictional realities. But that is not all, the later interpretation of Batman in the Batman vs. Superman and Justice League movies provide an additional world. And these are just the movies. The Batman comics, by events, timeline and continuity present several different worlds as well. Moreover there are different text interpretations of the character, such as "Gotham by Gaslight", a comic that envisions the character living in 1800's. This connects to the previously mentioned argument of Ryan and Thon (2014) regarding imaginative and logical conceptions of fiction. The imaginative conception regards accepting that specific traits of named entities can vary by text, which is adequate enough to account for the general knowledge people have about fictional characters as well as their main themes. For example Batman becoming a vigilante after the murder of his parents which has become a generally known fact in popular culture, one that is most often left intact even in the wildest variations of the character. However the logical conception demands that every contradiction to the previous continuity be considered a new fictional reality and in the context of narrative ontology, this demand is reasonable. While all the texts; comics, movies, video games about Batman are providing narratives about the iconic vigilante, they do not all refer to the same fictional character nor to the same fictional reality. The Batman that Val Kilmer and Michael Keaton portrayed is not the same person as the one portrayed by Christian Bale which is not the same person as the one portrayed by Ben Affleck and the cause for the difference is not of the actors but of the residing fictional reality and therefore the world (universe from a larger point of view) the narrative takes place in.

From these all, it can be concluded that people conceptualize different texts and their fictional realities, worlds to be of separate sovereignty, especially when they differ enough from one another. In a practical example, it is quite easy to make sense that people do not conceptualize the narratives of Seinfeld and Game of Thrones to exist in the same reality. While in a more nuanced way, the Batman situation above

prove that even narratives about the very same character does not necessarily relate to the same fictional reality. Therefore when crossovers are to be considered, people, just as they apparently do not consider Batman and SpongeBob to coexist, intuitively and by reason do not expect characters from different fictional realities of distinct worlds to be able to meet and interact. Regarding this notion, Skolnick and Bloom (2016) argue that audience's perceived likelihood of a crossover reflect the organization of their fictional world cosmology.

When a narrative crossover is to be executed, this explained dynamic then accounts for the part of the equation that relates to the perceptual fictional reality, the audience expectation. However, there is also the rest of the equation that relates to the ontological component of fictional reality. The obvious or not-so-obvious barriers that stand between fictional texts in the form of different characteristics or accepted realities must be taken into consideration when a crossover is to be made. In a crossover, the transfictionally migrating entities not only bring with them their own fictional reality but also do accept and conform to the reality of the text they are visiting as their presence and all the narrative dynamics occurring in the crossover are grounded by the rules and reality of the hosting text. Therefore to be able to facilitate a crossover; fictional realities, characters or other entities of which are to cross over must be able to recognize each other's existence or at least must be in a position to be able to make such recognition. Otherwise attempting crossovers between contradicting fictional realities, which would be unable to recognize that of one another, would be ontologically problematic, undesirable and might decrease the perceived realities of all participants by the audiences, as well as causing controversy and problems regarding plot, continuity and narrative. This notion effectively, yet implicitly regulates the crossover possibilities between respective fictional texts and their residing fictional realities.

For an example, the CSI-Without a Trace crossover can be again referred to. The ontology of the presented fictional realities residing in CSI and Without a Trace respectively, considerably resemble each other, thus making a crossover between them as problem free as can be as characters of neither side are likely to be confronted by any facts of the fictional reality of the host they are visiting which will contradict to that of their own. It would be different however if Grissom was to cross over to Flash (TV series of the speedster superhero). The differences between the residing fictional realities of these respective works are of spectacular proportion, a notion effectively forbidding any possibility of a crossover acceptable by consistency and ontological reason. Living in a world very similar to that of our own, the crime scene investigators of CSI would experience cognitive dissonance at a considerable proportion if they were to meet Barry Allen (Flash, who is actually an associate of theirs as he is a crime scene investigator himself) who possesses superhuman powers as do many characters around him. Summarizing this resolution, the fictional texts and their realities, entities of another fictional reality can conform and thus can cross over to/with are considerably decided by the context and ontology of the nature of their own fictional reality.

With both the audience perception of fictional world-character matching and the ontological nature of the fictional realities of respective fictional texts affecting possibilities and limitations regarding crossovers between fictional texts at play, answering the question of which other texts that a specific text of fiction can crossover with provides a worthy narrative and artistically philosophical challenge. In order to address this challenge, it is the intention of this crossover framework to extensively theorize a generally applicable method to assess and determine crossover compatibility between respective works of fiction. The presentation of such a narrative tool should help both the academic literature of narratology and the field of narrative arts by presenting both the theoretical ontological reasoning for the possibilities/limitations of crossovers between respective texts and by providing



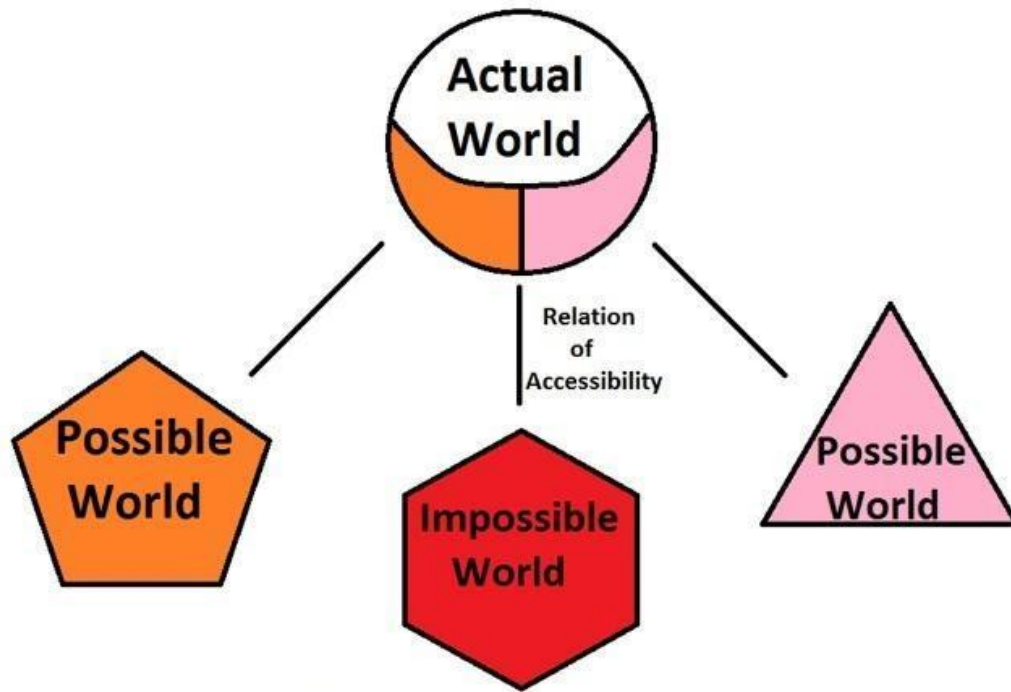
authors with an applicable model to assess whether two (or more) specific works of fiction are crossover compatible for narrative purposes. To build the necessary methodology, this framework will adapt and apply a version of the Possible Worlds Theory to determine crossover compatibility.

#### **4.2.1 Possible Worlds Theory**

Having briefly introduced the Possible Worlds Theory, its history and function in the early parts of this work, it is now time to explore the working dynamics of the theory before beginning the presentation of its adaptation by this framework as a model for determining crossover compatibility.

The Possible Worlds Theory, according to Pavel (1986) is modal semantics. The model of the theory projects a universe that is structured around an element in the center. The central element is referred to as the Actual World (AW) around which all other members of the system, which represent all other possibilities, exist. When the model is used for the context of fiction, the actual world in the system center represents the world in which the narrative of the fiction takes place. According to Pavel, a literary text (or any fictional narrative of any medium for that matter) establishes a new actual world which imposes its own laws (through its depicted fictional reality) on the surrounding system, defining its horizon of possibilities (Pavel 1975). The model of the theory judges the other members, worlds of the system that exist around the central element with their compatibilities to the laws of the Actual World. For a world in this system to be possible, it must be linked to the Actual World with a relation of accessibility (Ryan 2013) which accounts for respecting the principles, laws imposed by the Actual World in question. In this way, every world of the system that respects the principles of the Actual World through non-contradiction is a Possible World (PW) while those members of the system that include contradicting aspects are Impossible Worlds (IPW).

**Figure 4.11:** A General Schema of the Possible Worlds Theory



The ability of the Possible Worlds Theory in the context of fiction is that it gives us a tool, a logical model through which we can understand how a fictional reality binds the text that it resides over, affecting the possibilities for its narrative. To be able to do this, Possible Worlds Theory presupposes that a fictional reality acts as its actual counterpart does. In that aspect, the Possible Worlds Theory is all about respecting the respective realities of fiction as their relative actualities instead of dismissing them simply as stories that are not true. The theory, not diminishes the unreality of fictional worlds but in a way celebrates their relative existences. In fact Alvin Plantinga argues possible worlds as ways things could, and thus can, be (Plantinga 1976). The two tendencies of fictionalism account for this dynamic. Explained by Deliu, one of these tendencies sees the real world in the same status as possible worlds but with the real world as an actualized possible world while the other tendency accepts the real world as a solid point outside the possible worlds system,

acting as a referent (Deliu 2015). David Lewis (quoted in Pavel 1986) goes one step further and proposes a view that sees all possible worlds with all their objects as real as the real world. A rather extreme position, one that is not without its criticism (see Pavel 1986). On a more moderate level though, Thomas Pavel argues that for their readers, fictional texts present worlds that are not necessarily fractured along a fictive-actual line and that they deserve to be examined on their own terms (Pavel 1986). Similarly, Alexius Meinong sees fictional worlds as sources of knowledge in themselves, deserving of respect in that matter (see, Antonelli, David 2014). Meanwhile Marie-Laure Ryan argues that narratives present their own textual actual worlds (Ryan 2013). All these statements help to make a point regarding the philosophical idea behind the view of fiction that is harbored by the Possible Worlds theorists. That by ontological reason; the reality of fiction, counterpart to the way the actual reality is at play in the real world, is binding and affective in its own domain.

As the Possible Worlds Theory underlines the ontological requirement of a fictional reality to act as its actual counterpart does, then there appear limits as to what can and can not happen within the domain governed by a specific fictional reality which become its ontological rules. In fact, according to Ryan (2018) it is these kind of rules that determine what can and can not exist, what is and is not possible in a fictional world. Supporting that, Mutanen (2013) argues that the fundamental idea of Possible Worlds models is to serve as linguistic tools aimed to characterize (fictional) realities.

For standalone texts of fiction, the Possible Worlds Theory enables us to create models through which it is possible to test truth conditions and explore narrative possibilities regarding that fictional reality. Accordingly, Mutanen (2013) states that model sets of this theory can be used to analyze modal notions of possibility. As for this model; for any factual statement to be possibly true or for any occurrence to be possible in the context of a specific fiction, it must not contradict to the previous facts asserted by the narrative and must respect to the ontological rules imposed. This is a

good point to apply the Possible Worlds Theory on a fictional text to show how it functions. And to serve as the textual example, this work will once again refer to a character who, for anyone reading this work, has surely become their favourite entomologist and crime scene investigator. Cue Gil Grissom and his native text; CSI.

As previously explained, and very well known for the audience of the series, the setting of the CSI TV series and therefore the fictional reality that resides in this specific text is a realistic one that pretty much portrays a fictional version of the real world in a rather straightforward way. Keeping in mind the in-effect fictional reality and the canon, continuity of the text; this work will now speculate two storylines and then two factual statements for CSI respectively and resort to apply the Possible Worlds Theory to create model sets in order to see how these speculations will measure in respect to the fictional reality of CSI.

**Table 4.3:** Speculative Scenarios for the Text of CSI

<b>Speculative Scenario 1:</b>	<b>Last Meal of the Clowns:</b> When a couple in clown costumes is found murdered in a Las Vegas diner, Grissom and his team are called to investigate the double homicide.
<b>Speculative Scenario 2:</b>	<b>Crime Scenes from History:</b> A number of young recruits are accepted into Grissom's team. However, seeing how much these youngsters are dependent on technology to solve crimes, a disturbed Grissom decides to take the new recruits to a time travel trip back to the scenes of famous crimes committed in history to show them how the job used to be done the old school way.

These two speculative scenarios present two "probable" states of affairs, two worlds per se, compatibilities of which to the main text of CSI then become the question. According to the Possible Worlds Theory, we can build a modal system to determine whether the narratives of either scenario pose a possible world to CSI. To create this system, we must first determine the central element, which in the context of fiction represents the main text, in this case, CSI. The next step would be to place the other elements to the system, in this case the two scenarios at hand, to check whether a relation of accessibility can be argued to exist between these probable worlds and the center. As explained before, the relation of accessibility can only be of the case if a world of the system does not contradict the central element in any way. Most importantly in terms of ontological rules and narrative continuity.

The first scenario does not explicitly contradict the fictional reality of CSI in any detectable way. It takes place in Las Vegas, Grissom and his team's residence. Includes a crime (plot), events of which seemingly do not violate any ontological rules that the CSI narrative goes by. And the general outline of the story seems to be a good fit with the rest of the CSI narrative. Because this scenario does not contradict the ontological rules of CSI's residing fictional reality or the accepted canon of its continuity in any obvious way, the world it accounts for in our modal system can be argued to be connectable to the Actual World of CSI main text with a relation of accessibility. Therefore, the world of this scenario presents a Possible World to the Actual World of CSI, a valid probability of a way that CSI narrative can progress in, should the powers that be with the authority to determine fictional reality regarding the text in question choose to take that path.

However, the situation is considerably different for the second scenario. While Grissom educating young rookies in his team was a recurring theme of the series, these education efforts usually occurred in more conventional ways than, say, time travel. The inclusion of a supernatural element such as time travel effectively contradicts the ontological rules of the residing fictional reality of CSI which is

depicted to be very similar to the actuality of our own. Unlike the situation in texts such as *Back to the Future*, time travel is not present nor is it a reasonably acceptable or expectable theme for the fictional reality of CSI. According to Mutanen (2013), when there is contradiction in the given model set, the model construction is frustrated. Such contradictions, do not allow for there to be a relation of accessibility and without that accessibility the model set can not function. Ryan states that such a world that is not connected to the Actual World (the central element), in any way is an Impossible World (Ryan 2013). Therefore, with a relation of accessibility not arguable, the second scenario presents an Impossible World to the Actual World of CSI. Not a probability that the CSI narrative can progress in without conflicting and contradicting the ontological rules of its own fictional reality.

Having seen how narrative possibilities can be analyzed through the application of the Possible Worlds Theory, it would also be productive so show how this theory can also be utilized to test the truth probabilities of any factual statement relating to a specific fiction.

**Table 4.4:** Fictional Fact Claims for the Text of CSI

<b>Fictional Fact Claim 1:</b>	Gil Grissom solves 15 crossword puzzles every morning while having breakfast before going to work.
<b>Fictional Fact Claim 2:</b>	When a deaf lady asked Gil Grissom for road directions, Grissom was not able to communicate with this person.

Possible Worlds Theory can be utilized for the testing of factual probabilities for fictional contexts in just the same manner that it can be applied to test narrative possibilities. For this purpose, the factual statement at hand must be considered as a world in which the factual claim occurs and then it just becomes a matter of testing

through this theory, whether that specific world is a possible or impossible world to the central element, namely the fictional reality in which the factual statement is claimed to have occurred in. In this aspect, this notion is very similar to the concept of Walton's reality principle (see the Reality Principle/Minimal Departure elaboration in the Fictional Reality section). It was David Lewis' argument that truth conditions regarding non-explicit matters of a text could be reached using the explicitly provided material (Lewis 1978). Exactly how we are going to utilize the Possible Worlds Theory here, for this purpose.

Regarding the first fact claim, if a world in which Grissom supposedly solves 15 such puzzles at breakfast is tested for its probability through whether there exists a relation of accessibility between this world and the Actual World (CSI text) in question, the outcome would be favorable. The explicit information given by the text, therefore recorded in its canon as accepted facts, history of the fictional reality show that Grissom enjoys puzzles, that he is an intellectual and that such a habit would not be surprising for the presented characteristics of the peculiar crime scene investigator. Therefore, with probable cause and much more importantly without apparent contradiction, a world with the first fact claim can be argued to present a Possible World for the Actual World in the center.

The second claim however does not pass the scrutiny so easily if referred to the presented facts through the narrative of CSI, therefore its canon. Grissom's mother was deaf since Grissom was little and the text explicitly presents information regarding how Grissom learned sign language as a child to be able to communicate with his mother as well as many occasions in the narrative showing that Grissom is very fluent and capable in sign language. It would be therefore contradicting to the facts of the fictional reality of the text if Grissom could not communicate with a deaf person. Ryan (2013) explains the concept of non-contradiction as the impossibility of the coexistence of contradictions. In relation, a Grissom who is highly qualified in sign language and a Grissom who can not communicate using sign language can not

exist within the same text. Factual contradictions as such violate the requirement of non-contradiction and cause reason to reject the possibility of an accessibility relation, rendering worlds of factual claims contradicting the accepted facts of the Actual World as Impossible Worlds.

#### **4.2.2 Possible Worlds as a Crossover Compatibility Model**

In the previous section, this work has shown how the Possible Worlds Theory is utilized as a way to test truth conditions and narrative possibilities for the context of fiction by conceptualizing subject probabilities as worlds and then comparing the ontological fit between these worlds and the main reference point. According to Quine (1969), reference is meaningless unless relevant to a coordinate system and accordingly, the models of the possible worlds model sets are all about testing whether a relation of accessibility stands between the respective elements of the model set and the central element of the system which acts as the reference point.

This framework will argue that the same logic can also be employed in the context of fictional crossovers to assess crossover compatibility between specific texts. To build a model that can be utilized for this very task, this framework will now adapt a version of the Possible Worlds Theory, specifically designed to check whether symmetry, thus an ontological narrative compatibility exists between the fictional realities of distinct texts and the worlds that they depict.

Compatibility model of the Crossover Framework proposes that to be able to evaluate a specific idea of a crossover narrative, a Possible Worlds model set be created with the (to be) hosting text of the crossover placed as its central element, the Actual World, and all the native texts (or the texts of their continued residence if applicable) of the desired participant entities of the crossover placed around this center as the other element worlds. The model set would then function according to



the principles of the Possible Worlds Theory as each element world (and therefore the respective fictional reality of the candidate participant entity) would be compared to the reference of the center (the fictional reality of the hosting text) in terms of ontological, narrative and canonical compatibility to test whether a relation of accessibility can be argued to exist between these elements of the system and the center.

The Crossover Framework argues that the compatibility of three concepts between an element world and the central element be taken into consideration to determine whether a relation of accessibility can be argued.

**Table 4.5:** Compatibility Factors for a Relation of Accessibility

<b>Compatibility of Ontological Rules:</b>	This item regards the rules of the acting fictional reality. For compatibility, symmetry between what is and is not possible to happen needs to hold between worlds. For example: the existence (or the lack of) magic.
<b>Compatibility of Setting:</b>	This item regards the concepts of time and spatial setting. For compatibility, symmetry between the depicted time period and a mutuality of geographical space needs to hold between worlds. For example: a setting of modern day or medieval period (time), a setting of Earth or an imaginary realm (spatial).
<b>Compatibility of Canonical Status:</b>	This item regards the sum of accepted facts and history. For compatibility,

	<p>symmetry between the accepted facts and the history of occurred events needs to hold between worlds. For example: whether the history of a world includes an event that contradicts to that of the other.</p>
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For worlds for which the principle of non-contradiction is of the case in the context of these compatibility factors, a relation of accessibility to the central element can be argued, which in this case would mean that entities of that world then can literally access the fiction of the center through a crossover. Mutanen (2013) argues that when transitivity, symmetry holds between worlds, there is a modal system. For this context, it would mean that, such a situation would render the text, the conceptualized world in the system of which is established to present a Possible World through its relation of accessibility to the Actual World in the center; *crossover compatible* to the text that is conceptualized in the system as the central element.

However, for worlds of the system that present ontological or canonical contradictions to the central element, a relation of accessibility can not be argued to exist which would effectively mean that the entities of these worlds can not access the fiction of the center through a crossover as the symmetry simply does not hold. Ryan (2013) states that two or more incompatible worlds put together into a single one to be an impossible world. Such a situation would then render the text, the conceptualized world in the system of which is established to present an Impossible World as it can not facilitate a relation of accessibility to the Actual World in the center; *crossover incompatible* to the text that is conceptualized in the system as the central element.

Simply summarized, when a specific text is placed as the center of a possible worlds model set; crossover compatibility between that text and other specific texts can be tested by checking whether these texts present possible worlds to the central element if their worlds are placed in the system as elements. The presented fictional realities of the worlds in the system are then compared through their ontological, narrative and canonical standings to the reference of the fictional reality presented by the fictional world in the center. If, as the result of this test, a world is established as a Possible World to the Actual World of the center, the texts are crossover compatible. If however, a world is established to be an Impossible World to the Actual World of the center, then the texts are not crossover compatible.

#### **4.2.3 Building a Crossover Compatibility Model Set**

Having explained how the Possible Worlds Theory can be adapted to assess crossover compatibility between specific fictional texts, it would be productive to show how a model set for this very purpose can be build. However before this framework can show how such a model would look like, one last variable needs to be taken into account which is the setting medium of a crossover narrative. The setting medium remains a very important variable for the narrative of a crossover as it is the factor that decides who fits where in the host and guest dynamic.

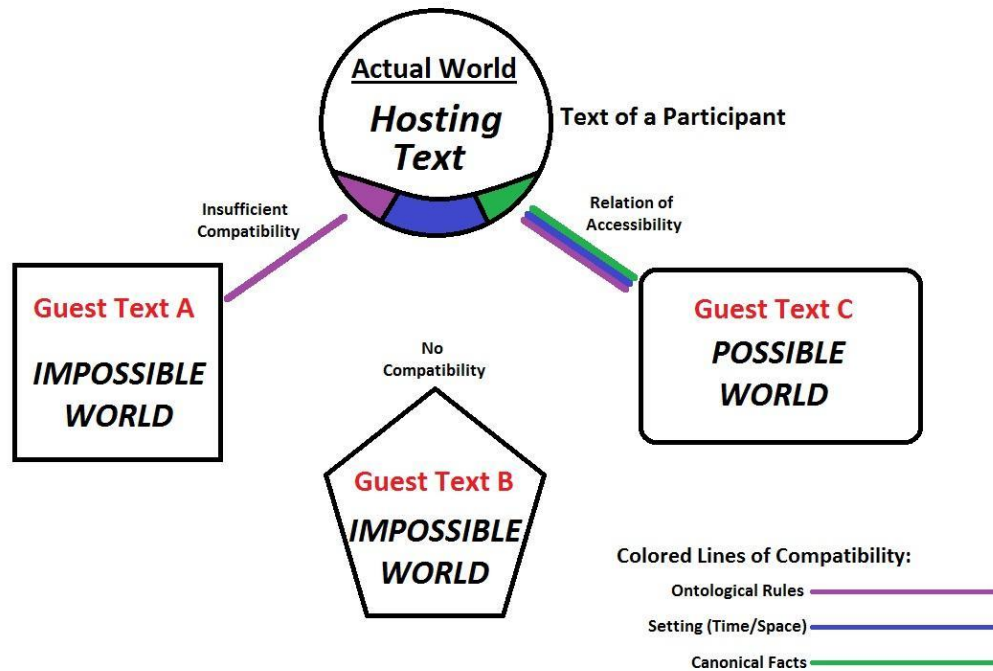
In a crossover, entities from two or more respective works come together, however, these works all have their own mediums for reaching their respective audiences and one of the main requirements of a crossover is a common medium through which the narrative of the story containing entities from all participating sides, in collectivity, can reach the audience. Two different ways can be utilized in providing a medium for the narrative of a crossover story. These are either using the already existing medium of one of the participating sides or producing a crossover specific medium for the conduction of the transfictional narrative. Both are important narrative decisions, not

only significant for productional purposes but also as they affect how the model set is built.

Regarding crossovers for which the medium of one of the participants is to be utilized for that of the narrative, the text that is going to serve as the host shall be placed as the central element of the model set, the Actual World. Then all other texts, entities of which are being considered as guests, represent the other elements, worlds of the system. This host-guest relationship is a rather hierarchical one in the sense that, with the hosting text serving as the setting of the crossover narrative, it is then to the tune of the music of the host that all probable guests need to be able to dance in order to be crossover compatible.

With the host of the text being that of one of the participants of the crossover, in the simplest sense, the host is a narrative itself with all the previously elaborated components of a narrative. Therefore in such cases, the crossover narrative already starts with a considerable background as the hosting text has its own residing fictional reality which is comprised of numerous fictional entities, ontological rules, a setting and a canonical history. With the hierarchical position the hosting text earns through its position in the center of the model; it then becomes the reference point to which all other texts, represented by their respective worlds in the system are to be judged in terms of narrative compatibility. Any member of the system that does not contradict the fictional reality of the center in terms of ontological rules, narrative setting and canonical facts can be argued to be connected to the center with a relation of accessibility and therefore presents a world that is crossover compatible to the center. While any world of the system that contradicts the fictional reality of the center in terms of one or several of these items does not present a relation of accessibility and thus is not crossover compatible.

**Figure 4.12:** A Possible Worlds Model Set Schema For a Crossover Utilizing the Setting Medium of a Participant



Above, you see an exemplary Possible Worlds model set that is designed to assess crossover compatibility between four distinct fictional texts. In this hypothetical crossover, the medium of one of the participants is utilized as the setting medium of the crossover narrative and thus, that text is placed in the center as the Actual World as explained. The probable Guest Texts of A, B and C are placed as the other elements of the model set. The coloured lines between the elements of the system show compatibility factors that are the ontological rules (Purple), Time/Spatial Setting (Blue) and Canonical Facts (Green), the combination of the three of which allow for a relation of accessibility.

As it is a fictional narrative itself, the hosting text already possesses these three factors of its own that precede the crossover story for which it is to serve as the host. In the example above, it can be seen that while Guest Text A presents compatibility

to the center in terms of ontological rules, its fictional reality is incompatible with the reference of the center in terms of setting and canon which renders its world an Impossible World and therefore not crossover compatible. Similarly, Guest Text B contradicts the central element in terms of all three compatibility factors which renders its world also an Impossible World and not crossover compatible. However, it can be seen that Guest Text C presents non-contradiction to the center in terms of all three compatibility factors and therefore its world is connected to the central element, the Actual World of the system with a relation of accessibility. This being the case, the fictional reality and thus the world of Guest Text C is crossover compatible to the hosting text.

For a real life example, we can refer back to the CSI-Without a Trace crossover. For example, for the first part of the crossover that took place in an episode of CSI, the text of CSI would represent the Actual World in the model with its fictional reality effectively becoming the reference point. If the text of Without a Trace was placed in the model as a world, it would present non-contradiction to the center in terms of any of the compatibility factors and thus its world would be connected to the center with a relation of accessibility, rendering the fictional reality and the world of Without a Trace; a Possible World for and thus crossover compatible with CSI. However if some other popular texts were represented in the model as well, the outcome might not be the same. As stated before, TV series Flash for example would contradict the center in terms of ontological rules, the TV series Game of Thrones would fail to comply with the center in terms of setting (both time and space) and on the cinema front, texts of the Marvel Cinematic Universe would present contradictions to the center in terms of accepted facts of canon (as well as ontological rules). Therefore, world representations in the model of none of these texts would be connected to the Actual World of CSI with a relation of accessibility, a situation effectively rendering all these fictional texts, Impossible Worlds to, and therefore not crossover compatible with CSI.

On the other hand, there are crossovers that employ the production of a specific medium for the crossover narrative. In such cases, a new setting medium is of the question and instead of all other texts being guests to a host that is a participant of the crossover, all participating texts become guests to the narrative specific host. This situation affects the construction of the model set as well as effecting the ontological dynamics at play. When building the Possible Worlds model set of this kind of a crossover, the narrative specific medium serves as the host and therefore shall be placed as the central element of the model set, representing the Actual World of the system. Similar to the other builds, then all the texts, the entities of which are being considered as participants represent the other elements, worlds of the system.

The difference in the narrative dynamics of utilizing a crossover specific medium lies in the rules that are imposed by the central element through its hierarchical position. Unlike in the use of a participant's medium, the narrative of which precedes the crossover, as the crossover specific medium is produced for the very purpose of carrying out the crossover narrative, it does not necessarily precede the crossover in any way. Without a preexisting set of conditions (ontological rules, canonical events and the like), a crossover specific medium is like a blank page; not necessarily imposing possibilities and limitations from the get go, but holds the possibility to be designed especially in a way that will allow for the desired participants to be able to conform to. This does not specifically need to be the case as a crossover specific medium can be very much limiting in the ontological sense, so much that it functions exactly as a participant's medium would if it was to serve as the host but what is meant here is that as such a narrative specific medium is to be produced especially for the narrative at hand, it can be narrativistically and ontologically designed specifically to be able to host a number of selected texts.

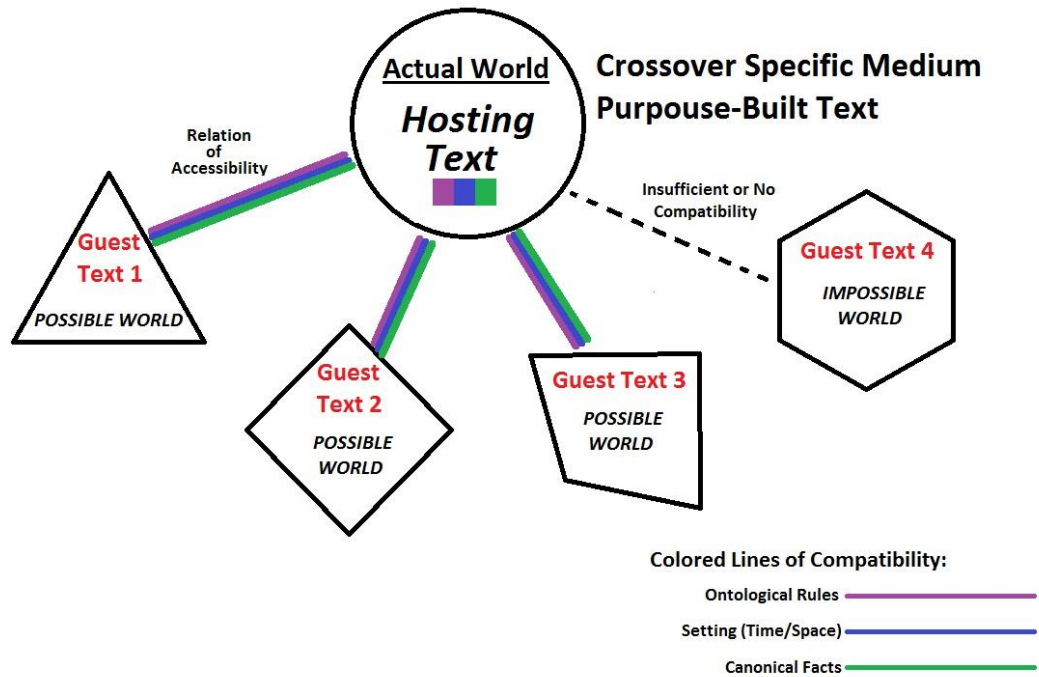
The use of crossover specific mediums are often employed for crossover narratives that facilitate the meeting of a great number of distinct texts (many participant entities of different nativities) as otherwise a standard host-guest relationship becomes more convenient. In an analogy, while it would be easier for one to host one or two guests in the comfort of his own home, if one wants to throw a party for a hundred guests, it is often more reasonable to arrange a venue. Indeed many examples of crossovers that include many participants employ the use of crossover specific mediums. Prominent examples can be DC Comic's specific comic titles for its massive crossover event Crisis on Infinite Earths or Marvel's The Avengers movies that are produced specifically to serve as hosts that facilitate the reunion of all their cinematic heroes.

A Possible Worlds model set for a crossover with a narrative specific medium would be very similar in general appearance to one that is for a crossover narrative hosted by a participant's medium. However the main difference in this approach of using a crossover specific medium is caused by the blank-page state of the host. As it is the tradition of the Possible Worlds Theory; the central element is used as the reference point. For the crossover specific medium to be able to provide this reference to the system that orbits it; the Actual World of system presented by the hosting text needs to be saved from its blank-page status. Then the important point becomes determining the ontological rules, setting and the canonical history of the crossover specific medium, the acting Actual World, very precisely so that it can act as the referential central element.

Two different methods can be used in building the model set and the choice of method here is rather related to the way how the design of the hosting text is decided. The first method would be to give the hosting text; ontological rules, a setting and a canonical history of its own from the start. This way, the host can act immediately as the reference point and the model set is then build and compatibility between texts assessed exactly as it would be if the host was a participant's text.



**Figure 4.13:** A Possible Worlds Model Set Schema For a Crossover Utilizing a Crossover Specific Medium



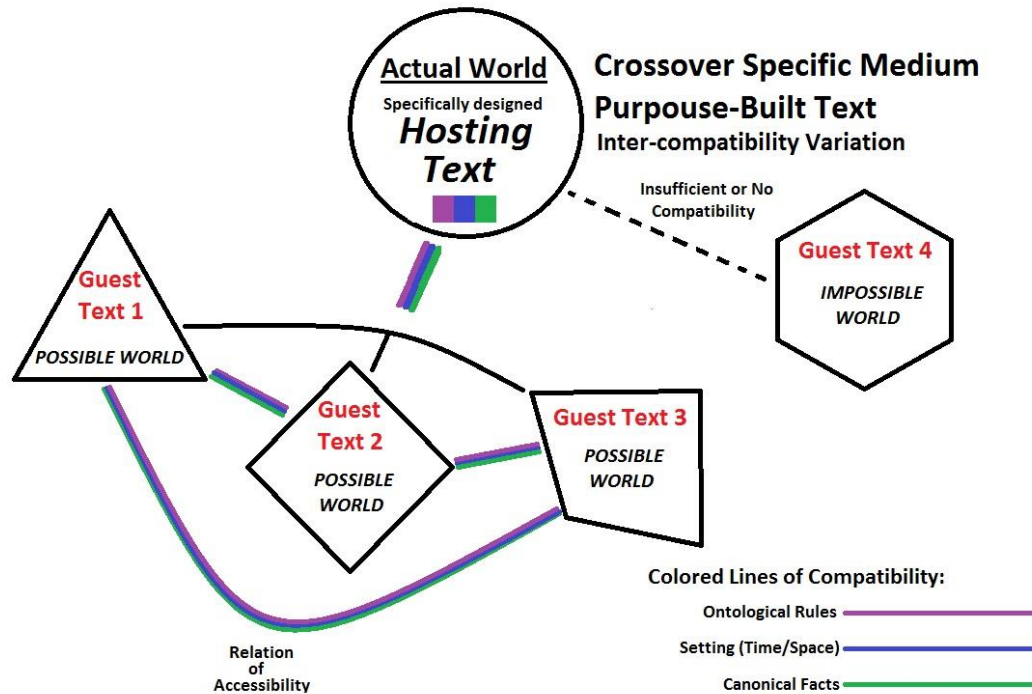
If the hosting text is not desired to be designed in its own particularity; a possible way of providing it with ontological rules, setting and a canonical history can be importing those of the primary participant. By doing so, the blank state of the narrative specific host is filled by the background of the primary participant that preceded the crossover and a reference point is thus created for further participants. However the most important thing of note here would be that with each new participant; more rules, more details of the background, setting and more history is added. Even though the necessity of a relation of accessibility ensures compatibility, even compatible additions bring more variables which may provide additional possibilities and limitations. According to Kahneman (2011), regarding Possible Worlds models, less restrictions are imposed on the model construction when fewer things are known. Therefore, the additions of each new Possible World to the Actual

World may render some previously possible ones impossible or just the other way around.

The second method on the other hand is productive for crossover narratives with many participants and is especially useful if a crossover that brings together a number of pre-selected distinct texts is desired. Additional caution is needed in these kind of narratives to make sure that the participants are a good fit for each other as well as for the hosting text. This method proposes leaving the blank nature of the hosting text initially and utilizing a Possible Worlds model to help design a setting medium, an Actual World that is of a specific state to facilitate the meeting of a number of particular participants.

For this purpose, after building the model set, relations of accessibility can be sought between the representational worlds of all the desired participants instead of between their worlds and the central element. Such a method would be productive to confirm the inter-compatibility of the desired participants. After this process, it becomes possible to set the rules and variables of hosting text accordingly, in a way that will allow for a relation of accessibility with the other elements of the system that are proven to be inter-compatible with each other. Unlike the top-down approach of the original model, this version is a build-up variation that aids narrative convenience.

**Figure 4.14:** A Possible Worlds Model Set Schema For a Crossover Utilizing a Crossover Specific Medium; Inter-compatibility Variation



The main point of Possible Worlds model sets regarding crossovers is that they can be utilized as a tool that enables us to assess the possibility whether the worlds of the texts that are desired to crossover with each other can functionally coexist in a universe system. In the endresult, this is what a crossover actually achieves; a narrative of this kind establishes its participants as coexistents, regardless whether this was the intentional aim of the story. It is then no surprise that the unified narrative terrain that transfictional appearances (such as crossovers) bring texts into is often referred in the media industry as a fictional universe.

A fictional universe then becomes a collection of texts that relate to the same fictional reality. And while, when considering the fictional reality of a single work of fiction, the concept of a universe might be considered an overcomplication, it becomes justified when the specific work of fiction is a lengthy one including many

installments but can be even further justified in cases where several virtually independent narratives are transfictionally joined together at points, either to supplement a grand narrative or just to underline that they are all independent yet interconnected narratives progressing in parallel to each other. Which is a tricky situation in narrative context as in a crossover; either characters (entities) that are already established to exist within the same fictional universe do meet or characters belonging to different fictional realities come together and both situations requires the mutual recognition of the respective realities and universes of each other, a dynamic that is perhaps of most ontological sensitivity for the narrative cases of the latter kind.

This is where the beauty of employing the adapted Possible Worlds model comes into play. Gee (2004) states that possible worlds make it possible to act and test effects on simulation before putting them to action in the real world. In a narrative sense, the model adapted by this framework allows just that as it enables the testing of the narrative fit of a crossover combination through its model to see whether such a story is ontologically viable. By utilizing this model, it is possible to see whether the desired participant texts of a crossover idea can recognize and conform to the fictional realities of each other and coexist in the same universe before putting the narrative into production.

Before concluding this section, it would also be productive to showcase some of the peculiarities of Possible Worlds philosophy, as well as the ever enduring that of narrative arts, by underlining two interesting cautions that should always be taken into account when building Possible Worlds model sets for crossover compatibility assessment purposes.

#### **4.2.3.1 Possible Looking Impossible Worlds**

While a possible worlds model may seem straightforward in the sense that the matter is all about whether a relation of accessibility stands depending whether symmetry holds regarding the three compatibility factors, there are peculiar occasions in which the smallest of details may cause the most remarkable affects.

While the ontological rules and the settings of two texts might be compatible and their canonical histories seemingly non-contradictory, sometimes the tiniest, seemingly an irrelevant depiction in a text can make all the difference and might make it impossible for the two texts to be able to recognize each other's fictional realities and coexist in the same universe even though they are seemingly most compatible.

An example can be productive in showing how such a small variable may have a remarkable effect. The Turkish TV series *Paramparça* and *Hatırla Gönül* were both series of the same network, produced and broadcasted in the same period. Both shows take place in the present time Istanbul and the residing fictional realities of the two shows are similar enough to be able to facilitate the grounds for a mutual recognition of each other's realities however a little detail stands between the possibility of a crossover, in fact making it impossible. In an episode of *Hatırla Gönül*, the characters Gönül and Figen are shown watching television. What they are shown watching is the same network which broadcasts their show and they are in fact watching an episode of *Paramparça*. It is a common practice in TV shows for characters to watch the network which their series also belongs to for both advertising purposes as well as to avoid copyright problems that can arise if the characters watch a title or network, rights of which do not belong to the network airing the show. However the fact that Gönül and Figen are able to watch *Paramparça* on television would mean that the characters and events of *Paramparça* is a TV show to them as it is to us in real life. The presence of such a fact effectively ends any possibility that the fictional realities

of the two shows might be in the same fictional universe and also the fact that characters of Paramparça remain "fictionally fictional" to those of Hatırla Gönül ends any possibility of a crossover (at least the possibility of a non-controversial, ontologically non-problematic crossover) between the two shows.

Such an example shows the importance of seeking compatibility between the texts to the tiniest details. Even a seemingly irrelevant point in the ontological rules or a virtually random depicted event or stated fact in the canon of a participant might make it impossible for the texts in question to be able to recognize each other's existence. Even a micro-level detail of this kind can change a text's status from a possible to an impossible world in relation to the other text in terms of reality recognition. And crossing over entities of texts which have problems regarding the recognition of one another would be ontologically impossible, narratively undesirable and might decrease the perceived realities of all participants, as well as causing controversy.

#### **4.2.3.2 Impossible Looking Possible Worlds**

On the other hand, the dynamic can also occur in the exact opposite way. While the worlds of two texts may not be connected with a relation of accessibility owing to the lack of symmetry between some or all compatibility factors, there can be narrative tricks, at points where their use can be justified, that can aid to form linkages. As stated before, narrative arts are full of spectacular tools that sometimes may have the power to make what is impossible, possible.

Various narrative tricks of convenience, some supernatural, can be made use of to provide possibility. For texts, the ontological rules of which allow it, methods such as time travel or dimensional travel do provide means for characters to visit worlds that are not seemingly connected to theirs. The highly marketed TV adaptation of the

comic crossover event Crisis on Infinite Earths for example have employed the idea of a multiverse and the means of inter-universal travel to allow for crossovers between TV series that related to different fictional realities. This dynamic effectively allowed characters from TV shows of DC that collectively relate to the fictional reality often referred to as the "Arrowverse" to make a crossover with Smallville, a former TV series depicting a young Superman, that has long been off the air. Similarly the ability to time travel, if possible in the text, may provide the means for setting up crossovers between texts, setting time periods of which do not intercomply.

On a more worldly sense, the old narrative trick of "it-was-all-a-dream" always remains in the cards at all times, as well as justifying far fetched storylines as hallucinations or on other such bases that do not leave behind consequences. Ryan (2013) mentions the concept of metalepsis, the act of moving characters between different levels of reality within a text. Similar to how people haunted by Freddy Krueger shift in and out of dream sequences as they fight the tormented iconic villain. These, while might produce silly results unless grounded with good humor or an interesting concept, all remain possible methods to allow for unlikely relations of accessibilities. There would be no problem between a CSI and The Lord of the Rings crossover if Grissom was to dream solving the murder of Boromir. The matter in this context is all about providing a variable to the narrative that shifts the possibilities of coexistence, even if it does so in a lesser degree of fictional reality.

#### **4.2.3.3 Ontological Peculiarities**

The final, but perhaps the most important peculiarity of the possible worlds ideology lays in its loyalty to the concept of non-contradiction. It must be noted that, in its essential philosophy, the Possible Worlds Theory is more concerned with whether contradiction exists between the central reference point and the elements of the system than whether positive compatibility exists. Similar to how other

possibilities are eliminated in diagnostic medicine to reach a conclusive diagnosis, the Possible Worlds Theory reaches compatibility conclusions by ruling out the possibility of contradiction. This dynamic, as it stands, make for the possibility of logically unlikely but ontologically possible narrative scenarios.

If we are to assess crossover compatibility between distinct texts with the adapted possible worlds model proposed by this framework, we need to look at the three compatibility factors stated and judge whether a relation of accessibility might stand between the worlds of these texts depending whether there is contradiction between them. However contradiction can only be checked by comparing what is explicitly stated and depicted. This is to say that one can not look for contradictions between the things that are not known. It is possible to conclude that there stands a relation of accessibility between the fictional realities, worlds of CSI and Without a Trace because neither text explicitly contradicts the other in terms of ontological rules, setting or canonical events, history.

However, as stated, contradiction can only occur if it stands between matters of explicit depiction. Such a situation makes way for the possibility that quite far fetched arguments of non-contradiction between texts of considerably different works can be made. Let's showcase this peculiarity of possible worlds philosophy with a far fetched example of our own. The fictional reality of CSI, which is as similar as can be to the real world, has never explicitly depicted an event or made a statement regarding the existence of extraterrestrial life. However, just like in the real world, such a possibility has never been outright ruled out in the narratives of the text, thus by its fictional reality either. On the other hand the Predator franchise, the plot of which involves an ancient alien race of honorable hunter/warriors, depicts narratives in which these creatures often visit our planet for learning experiences through hunting adventures. The narratives of the Predator series also make it obvious that the existence of these creatures and their visits to our planet are not public knowledge. However unlikely and ridiculous a scenario it might sound like, a possible worlds



model that places the fictional reality of CSI as its central element and a text of the Predator franchise (the original movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger for example) would not rule out a relation of accessibility between the two texts as they do not display contradictions between explicitly stated matters by the text.

The point here is that the ontological understanding and therefore the possible worlds philosophy that stems from it does not concern itself with whether something makes sense but regards the pure sense of ontological possibility. In other words, the likely ridiculousness of the outcome does not rule out possibility as long as there stands non-contradiction between the explicitly stated facts and figures of the compatibility factors of the texts in question.

This does not mean however that such a situation creates an "anything goes as long as there is no-contradiction" mentality. While no-contradiction may provide the possibility of a relation of accessibility between distinct texts and their fictional realities; any crossovers that result from these transfictional bridges that stand between texts have narrative consequences as all installments of a narrative do. Any narrative that is a part of a specific fictional reality affects it, therefore affecting any and all future narratives relating to the same fictional reality that succeed it. And this exact point brings us to the final section of the Crossover Framework which is the theorization of the ramifications of a crossover on the fictional realities, thus texts that are involved in it.

### 4.3 RAMIFICATIONS OF A CROSSOVER

It would be most fitting to begin the final chapter of the Crossover Framework by introducing yet another fictional detective to help solve the mystery that is fictional crossovers. The fictional character John Munch, played by the talented actor Richard Belzer has become quite an important figure for the notion of crossovers in the last few decades owing to the fact that Munch is without a doubt the most well travelled fictional character in terms of transfictionality in modern fiction and popular culture.

Originally a character of the TV series "Homicide: Life On The Street", Munch made transfictional appearances in various episodes of other TV series through crossovers in a window of some twenty years, making his case an ideal one to showcase the narrative dynamics of crossovers that this work has elaborated so far. While appearing in his original role as a Baltimore homicide detective in the series Homicide: Life On The Street through the 7 season run of the series, the show made several crossovers with the TV series Law and Order. As the previously explained notion, the residing fictional realities of the respective series Homicide: Life On The Street and Law and Order were quite similar in nature, presenting possible worlds to each other in between which a relation of accessibility could be argued for. Therefore there was not only the ontological grounds for such crossovers but also the coexistence of these series (and their characters, worlds) in the same fictional universe, sharing the same fictional reality could be utilized to benefit the narrative strength of both shows, as well as functioning as an advertising opportunity for each show for the audience of the other as in the CSI-Without a Trace crossover.

Apart from Law and Order, Much also appeared in an episode of the TV series The Wire, the setting of which is also similar and its respective fictional reality conformable through non-contradiction, effectively presenting a possible world to those of Homicide: Life On The Street and Law and Order. His transfictional appearances are not limited to that however as Much made appearances in other

shows as well; such as the comedy TV series *Arrested Development* and there is even a metafictional appearance by Belter as the actor playing John Munch in the satirical comedy series *30 Rock*, to the fictional reality of which Munch and *Law and Order* are depicted to be fictional as it is to us.

Later on, when Munch's native text, that is the *Homicide: Life On The Street* came to an end at the end of its seventh season, Munch appeared in the TV series *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU)*, a spin-off from the *Law and Order* TV series where Munch had by then appeared a number of times through crossovers and became one of the main characters of the newly conceived series. This appearance is also especially notable for the canonical nature of these crossovers as the complete background fictional reality of the character John Munch, who according to the story had retired from the Baltimore Police Department and moved to New York to join a new unit, was transferred intact to the new series. Solidifying the fact that the Munch that joined *Law and Order: SVU* was not a new character, not a surrogate version of the character serving as the SVU counterpart of the original but the transfictional migration of the actual John Munch from *Homicide: Life On The Street*. In that sense, John Munch not only made another crossover but did something very few characters are capable of pulling off; a permanent crossover.

**Figure 4.15:** Detective John Munch (played by Richard Belzer) in Law and Order: Special Victims Unit



Source: Law & Order: SVU Episode “Wonderland Story” (2013), Universal Television, NBC.

In relation, these crossovers involving Munch are valid examples for the normative conceptualization this work has argued for in narrow defining crossovers. All these transfictional travels of the wise-witted and most likable detective Munch are narratives that satisfy the three rules of crossover qualification presented by this framework. These fictional narratives involve at least one fictional entity, the origination and the nativity of which belongs to a distinct text other than the host therefore satisfying the Rule of Belonging. These are narratives that are produced with the consent (and cooperation for that matter) of the right holders that maintain the authority to control the transfictional movement of and to determine fictional reality regarding the texts and their entities involved, therefore satisfying the Rule of Consent. And finally these crossover narratives effect the fictional histories of the participants involved, and thus are of canonical state, therefore satisfying the Rule of Canon.

The canonical nature of the crossovers involving Munch can be further observed in both the bringalong of the background fictional reality of the character and in the way the events that occur in these crossovers remain happened and remembered in the future narratives of the respective texts involved. The Wire crossover for example is worthy of mention in how the background fictional reality of the guest character is upheld in the host text as well. In that episode of *The Wire*, Munch, who was co-owner to a bar in *Homicide: Life On The Street*, is seen arguing with a bartender about a matter in which he states that he used to own a bar himself. Munch's move to *Law and Order: SVU* is even more important in this context as it shows that the events of the crossovers between *Homicide: Life On The Street* and *Law and Order* maintained their fictional reality for both series as Munch's relationships with the *Law and Order* characters remain mostly intact in *SVU*, albeit a few inconsistencies that likely stemmed from the fact that such a move was not a planned long-beforehand considering the character of Munch predated his new text considerably. Regardless, details of Munch's personal life such as his previous marriages and his background as a homicide detective are upheld faithfully to his native text.

The canonical nature of his crossovers is also proven by the fact that Munch was able to make his permanent crossover from his native text, *Homicide: Life On The Street* to his new continued residence, the *Law and Order: SVU*. Such a transfictional move was made narratively possible by the very fact that the crossovers involving Munch between *Homicide: Life On The Street* and the original *Law and Order* series remained canonical for both texts. The remembered occurrences that are Munch's meetings with *Law and Order* characters and the interactions as well as the mutual recognition by both series of each other's fictional realities made it possible for Munch to join the *Law and Order: SVU* when such a narrative spinned-off from the original *Law and Order* text. Such a dynamic can be explained by possible worlds philosophy. The previous relation of accessibility established between the worlds of *Homicide: Life On The Street* and *Law and Order* had placed both series in the same

fictional universe, bounded by the same fictional reality. It is this mutual recognition and inter-text connection that effectively rendered *Law and Order: SVU*, a text originating from the main *Law and Order* text as a spin-off, automatically as a possible world to *Homicide: Life On The Street* by association. The resulting relation of accessibility eventually allowing Munch's transfictional migration. Such a possibility would not have been in the cards, should the narratives of the crossovers between the mentioned TV series did not register into the canons of these respective texts.

Such a dynamic effectively proves that crossovers are not without consequence and thus these transfictional narratives affect certain ramifications for the texts that are involved in them. Ryan argues that the distance and possibility between different worlds of a possible worlds system fluctuates during the course of a story (Ryan 2013) as a narrative moves forward, presenting new facts and depicts further occurrences. Every depiction in a narrative opens and closes doors for new paths which the story now can or could have taken the direction of. For transfictional narratives, such as crossovers, this factor is at play in a heightened sense as all such occurrences enable and prohibit narrative probabilities for not just one but all the texts, the fictional realities of which are effected by the crossover story. Munch's meetings with *Law and Order* crew when he was still residing in his native text for example has enabled new possibilities for both texts, eventually making it possible for the character to join the SVU.

Ramifications of transfictional narratives do not only regard narrative probabilities however but in a wider perspective account for the permanent intertextual linkages that are formed through such narratives. Crossovers like those of John Munch's transfictionally connect previously unrelated texts, bringing the depicted worlds of these isolated texts into a common narrative terrain, unified under a singular residing fictional reality. The relations of accessibility that are established through crossovers between fictional texts, posing possible worlds to each other, are cemented by these

transfictional narratives which in result bring these texts together into a fictional universe, under the roof of the same fictional reality. In this ontological reason, the side effect of true crossovers (in respect to the definition of the term by this framework) is the establishment of transfictional bridges which as a ramification; forever connect the fictional realities of the texts involved. In this sense, it can be argued that John Munch brought an impressive number of sovereign fictional texts into a shared universe, bounded by the same fictional reality as he transfictionally travelled from text to text. A narrative side effect by ontological reason. The ramifications of building such world-bridges however might provide to be more than it meets the eye as setting such bridges that effectively place distinct texts as coexistents is sometimes easier than accounting for the long term narrative consequences of such narrative decisions. As stated before, though much more flexible than its actual counterpart, fictional reality is a rather binding concept. And the ontological ramifications, as well as certain conscious as well as instinctive audience expectations of and from these transfictional world-bridges come into effect once they are presented. And while it is relatively easier to build such a bridge, it is often most impossible to undo such an act.

Having established that crossovers, as the transfictional narratives they are, are not just effectless stories but have binding ontological consequences for all the texts involved in them, it is now time to explore how their effects can be complicated and ontologically problematic, as well as controversial in terms of audience and critical reception if and when adequate care and foresight are not provided. Before getting there however, one more crossover by detective John Much is in order for exploration to showcase how the audience of a text perceive the effects of such world-bridges established through crossovers.

A further notable appearance by Detective Munch, relevantly interesting for the investigation of this work, occurred in a crossover between *Homicide: Life On The Street* (when Munch was still a character of that show) and *X-Files* in an episode of

the latter TV series. Even though all other crossovers between the texts regarding Munch were of seemingly compatible fictional realities and therefore were rather easy to combine into a fictional universe through a possible worlds system, the situation with X-Files is different. While the others series in question were presenting fictional realities quite similar to real life, X-Files presented a fictional reality, though virtually very similar to real life, that included hidden conspiracies, supernatural creatures and most specifically the secret threat of an almost imminent alien invasion. In this sense, it was interesting to see Munch appear in the fictional reality of X-Files, as the presented fictional realities of the two shows were tricky in terms of inter-conformity. Still the episode in question was taking place in Baltimore, Munch's residency at the time, and Munch appeared in his role of a police detective once the characters belonging to X-Files found themselves in a police station, giving their accounts of a peculiar event, so it can be argued that the respective background fictional reality of Munch was transfictionally respected.

It is difficult how one can place the fictional reality that X-Files presents in the same universe with *Homicide: Life On The Street* and with other shows, *HLOTS* is placed under the same fictional reality with, however if one was to stretch a bit too far, accepting such a situation is not all together impossible considering that all supernatural elements within the fictional reality of X-Files is of hidden nature, secret and unknown to the general public thus making way for the emergence of the show's motto "The Truth is Out There" and the ridicule and difficulties X-Files protagonist characters Fox Mulder and Dana Scully face while in search of such secrets. Regarding this narrative situation, this crossover is a great example as an ontological peculiarity as in the previously explained possible worlds dynamic of seemingly impossible but narratively possible worlds enabled through non-contradiction regarding explicitly stated facts.



Regardless, such a combination for a crossover was at the very least confusing for the ontological expectations of the audiences as the presented fictional realities of both shows did not fit each other seamlessly even though there might not have been contradiction between explicitly stated facts. Mutanen (2013) states that even though a story might be incomplete, in the sense that not every fact of its depicted world is known in explicit detail, some stories are explicit enough in nature that its readers see the essential aspects of the intended reality. Also a possible reason for this seemingly disregarded issue of compatibility, also an interesting factor in this specific narrative, is the fact that this crossover was made between works of two separate networks with X-Files being on FOX and Homicide: Life On The Street on NBC. Still the crossover was conducted with the permission of the respective owners of intellectual property rights as both networks came to a legal agreement allowing the use of Munch for the episode which once again demonstrates the necessity of legal permission required for the fictionally real use of a character in another work (for more about this crossover, see Meisler 1999). Because the two shows in question were of different networks, little oversight was available and likely little concern was shown for the possible narrative problems that could arise in consistency regarding fictional reality.

Munch's appearance in the fictional reality of X-Files remains a curious case. As Munch has not appeared, nor mentioned, in another X-Files episode ever again and similarly as no other canonical transfictional appearances by X-Files entities were of the case for HLOTS or any Law and Order texts; it is difficult to exactly determine whether the John Much seen in X-Files was a counterpart version of the character that existed in the fictional reality of X-Files or whether it was the transfictional crossing of the actual character, also placing X-Files in the same universe as the other shows Munch had travelled to before and after the fact; effectively creating a quite peculiar situation which puts the shared world depicted by texts such as Law and Order series, HLOTS, The Wire and the like to be under direct threat of an alien invasion which, when you think of it, would rather diminish the importance of the theme of these

series which is based on solving daily individual crimes. Regardless which of these scenarios is of the case, Munch's appearance in X-Files and thus the inherent possibilities that comes with it were irreversibly portrayed. Marciak (2015) underlines the capacity of transfiction of joining two or more texts which the reader had no previous reason to perceive as connected and how the consciousness of the readers perceive the narrative spaces of these texts as fused when they see them together, a unification established through transfictional connection. And indeed, the audiences of both *Homicide: Life On The Street* and *X-Files* (as well as the those of the shows that these shows were transfictionally connected with) saw this crossover and associations thus followed. It is possible to find a number of discussions, by the fans of the respective series, online regarding possible explanations for the coexistence of the two shows in the same universe as well as alternative readings of various events in both shows if their existence in the same fictional universe is accepted. Even the most natural occurrences in *HLOTS* or *Law and Order* series can be interpreted very differently if they are accepted to be occurring in a fictional reality in which the supernatural occurrences depicted in *X-Files* are within possibility. Such an example shows just how serious notions such as fictional universes and their residing fictional realities are to a considerable number of dedicated viewers (audience) as well as showing consequences of crossovers in terms of audience expectation and perception.

Having elaborated, through the example of John Munch and his transfictional travels that how crossovers have ramifications regarding both the contexts of ontological and perceptual fictional reality, it is time then to explore the most ontologically controversial crossover, which very well might be, and quite possibly is, the single most dramatic narrative controversy in regards to the concept of fictional reality.

St. Elsewhere was a drama TV series about the lives of the doctors and the administration of a hospital, lasting for six seasons between 1982 and 1988. Throughout the six season run of the series, the narrative maintained a rather serious tone, presenting a fictional reality which is very similar to that of the real world and through its run, the show made a number of crossovers with other shows maintaining similar real-life like presented fictional realities such as *Homicide: Life On The Street* that posed possible worlds to its text. There was nothing about the depicted fictional reality of St. Elsewhere of note that would contradict with the fictional realities of the shows it crossed over with until the very last scene of the final episode of the final season of the show in which (in a scene rather open for interpretation) it was revealed that everything depicted in St. Elsewhere were in fact imagined by the character Tommy Westphall. Tommy was the autistic son of one of the doctors in the series, who is depicted in the final scene, again as autistic yet as the son of a construction worker (same actor who played his father) with the implication that all that occurred in the narrative of the show was a different life imagined by Tommy. For the individual fictional reality of the show, this revelation did not matter much, however, considering that the show had made a number of crossovers which implied that the depicted world of the show was coexisting in the same universe with the other shows that St. Elsewhere had crossed over with, relating to the same fictional reality; the situation became dramatically problematic in narrative and ontological contexts.

Comic and cartoon writer Dwayne McDuffie (2002) proposed a hypothesis that considering the presented fictional reality of St. Elsewhere was revealed to be the imagination of a young boy with autism, this would place all fictional realities which supposedly coexisted with that of St. Elsewhere in the imagination of Tommy Westphall as well. McDuffie offered a list of shows that crossed over with St. Elsewhere and the other shows that crossed over with them and claimed that if crossovers required the consistency of continuity through the shows they place in the same universe; all the fictional realities of the shows in the list he proposed were

compromised. It should be of note that one of the main reasons that the list of texts, the fictional realities of which were compromised was so long was due to none other than John Munch, our favourite transfictional migrant traveler. The crossover narratives between *St. Elsewhere* and *Homicide: Life On The Street* was enough reason to argue that John Munch existed in this "compromised universe" and therefore all the texts that Munch was able to visit were, by ontological reason, added to the list. If all these transfictionally interconnected texts were to be placed in a possible worlds model, the relations of accessibility that stood within them allowing for transfictional appearances, then became also the means through which this ontological virus per se spread.

Apart from those subscribing to this argument, McDuffie's hypothesis that *St. Elsewhere's* ending would result with the fictional realities of all related series existing within Tommy Westphalls' imagination also met with considerable objection, most notable and extensive of which can be argued to be the criticism by Brian Weatherson, a professor of philosophy who wrote "Six Objections to Westphall Hypothesis" (Weatherson 2004).

In his criticism, Weatherson lists six items of objection to what he refers to as Westphall Hypothesis. A summary of some of the items will be made by this work. First of all, as argued by many viewers of *St. Elsewhere* in other places as well, Weatherson underlines that the vagueness of the final scene of the series resulting in it being open for interpretation would result in the uncertainty in determining which presented setting was the actual residing fictional reality with the choice whether to accept that Tommy imagined the hospital or that he imagined the life in which his father was a construction worker left to the audience. Weatherson also underlines in this item that as the complexity of medical procedures and some of the events in the narrative of the series were too complicated for Tommy to imagine on his own, it is therefore also possible that it was the latter that was in his imagination. He lists further objections regarding even if the entire depiction of events in *St. Elsewhere*

were to be accepted to have happened in Tommy Westphall's imagination according to the fictional reality. One of these is the statement of the fact that seeing someone in a dream or imagining about them does not specifically mean that they are not real, meaning that even in the scenario that all the events and characters in the series were imagined by Tommy, it would not mean that they did not exist (fictionally) as Weatherson underlines that most people, people actually see in dreams or imagine about are actually real people and their presence in dreams do not alter with their reality. This item would also justify the appearance of St. Elsewhere characters in other shows such as *Homicide: Life On The Street*, as such characters might (fictionally) exist regardless of being (fictionally) imagined by Tommy. It is also discussed among viewers of the show, as well as mentioned by Weatherson that as television is available in the fictional reality that Tommy lives in as well, it is possible that the presence of some characters from other shows in St. Elsewhere do not mean that they are creations of Tommy's imagination but Tommy might have imagined about them as he knew about them, having watched them on television (similar to previous example how characters of *Paramparça* is fictional to the characters of *Hatırla Gönül* just as they are fictional in real life). Also the last item from Weatherson's criticism that this work will summarize is his statement that the other shows which crossed over with St. Elsewhere (and the shows that crossed over with them) clearly did not mean for their characters and their respective presented fictional realities to be products of Tommy Westphall's imagination. This work has previously discussed that the authority to determine fictional reality regarding a character or a work comes from the ownership of intellectual property and while those who hold such authority for their own characters and stories might have approved the crossover of their texts with St. Elsewhere, it is very clear that such an approval is not the same as approving that the existence of their fictional entities (even according to fictional reality) was within Tommy's imagination, especially considering that the depiction of events in St. Elsewhere was presented as fictionally real at time of the executions of these crossovers and the narrative of that series was not revealed (possibly) to be of

Tommy's imagination until the very last scene of the series.

The narrative controversy caused by *St. Elsewhere's* finale, to this very day, years after it aired on television, continues to spark interest and conflict. The opposing positions of McDuffie and Weatherson were only the tip of the iceberg. In terms of literary criticism, many experts and professionals from the world of narrative arts have joined in on the argument with their opinions, defending various positions while some scholars belonging to the fields of literature, television and cinema studies have also similarly done so. Meanwhile on the side of the audience, a decent amount of debate and discussion by the fans of these series can be found on various forums and platforms as well as the topic being a recurring subject in many panels in its day, being the subject of many questions.

It is a different and worthy discussion whether the fictional reality of all texts that are transfictionally connected to *St. Elsewhere* is compromised by the controversial finale of this series, one that this work will return to in later points, however the situation clearly proves that crossovers are not random narratives in their own realms but affect both ontological and expectational ramifications. Ryan and Thon (2014) argue that, in the cultural scene of our day, singular narratives are being replaced by the emergence of the concept of worlds in which these narratives take place, effectively referring to the idea of fictional reality. Ryan and Thon also further argue that while standalone plots run their courses, the narrative terrains in which they take place remain productive even after their story completes (Ryan & Thon 2014). Referring to the given examples that are the crossovers between *CSI-Without a Trace* and *HLOTS* and *Law and Order*, such transfictional narratives clearly affect and prohibit ontological possibilities and limitations. While the examples of the crossover between *HLOTS-X-Files* and the freaky situation with *St. Elsewhere* prove that these transfictional narratives result in negative audience and critical reaction as well as causing narrative complications of varying proportions when they are executed without the utmost care given to faithfully upholding the fictional realities of all the

texts involved and respecting inter-continuity.

While these examples of successful or controversial crossover narratives provide enough evidence that fictional crossovers affect narrative and ontological ramifications for the texts and therefore their fictional realities that are involved in them, exactly what these ramifications are have so far not been explored. Therefore it is now the intention of the Crossover Framework to contribute to the academical literature of narratology as well as aiding narrative arts by exploring this previously untheorized narrative mystery.

Through applying artistic and ontological reason, referring to the ideals of narratology and the possible worlds theory as well as to those of narrative and literary theory and finally by examining an exhaustive list of fictional works of the modern narrative culture executing acts of crossovers, this work has concluded and in effect theorized five different possible ways that can occur as the ontological and narrative result of crossovers and collages as ramifications for the texts and their fictional realities involved in them. The next five sections will explain and elaborate these five possible ways of ramifications in detail, respectively.

#### **4.3.1 Permanent Merge**

This first possible consequence is the ideal, full on ramification of a fictional crossover. In accordance to ontological reason and by causation; it is the expected endresult of a transfictional narrative that satisfies the normative crossover qualification criteria proposed by this framework which results in the permanent merging of the fictional realities involved in the crossover narrative into one and the establishment of the worlds of these texts as coexistents in the same narrative space, fictional universe.

The previously elaborated duality of transfictional migrants versus purpose built surrogates is of importance here (see Rules of Crossover Qualification section, as well as Parsons 1980). The satisfaction of this framework's rules of crossover qualification by a narrative establishes that the transfictionally appearing fictional entities in the crossover narrative are not surrogates created for that specific story but the actual fictional entities belonging to their own native (or continued residence) texts. This dynamic effectively necessitates transfictional connections and the fact that such bridges stand between the texts in question establishes that relations of accessibility stand through these bridges as well. Fictional reality flows through these bridges, connecting these texts and placing them in a singular system.

In the simplest understanding of the very complicated concept that is reality, for you to be able to read this body of work, you need to exist in the same reality as I who wrote it. Transfictionality in this sense acts in a very similar and rather a smooth way as the established relations of accessibility and the transfictional migrations that occur through them resulting in crossover narratives designate the texts that are involved in this process as coexistents, bound by the same residing fictional reality. Ryan (1991) argues that transfictionality pulls together disparate texts that are micro-narratives into a macro-structure. Additionally, Proctor (2018) also argues that it is these combinations that help to build storyworlds. Similarly, with crossovers, distinct texts are established as relating to the same fictional reality and this is the true sense of transfictional connection.

As long as it is accepted and established that the transfictional entities in a crossover narrative are the actual transfictional migrants from their respective texts, the permanent merge is an ontological necessity. On a productional point of view, the necessity of a fictional reality merge and the narrative bindingness (the canonical nature) of the crossover story is also effected by the setting medium chosen to present the narrative through. A text can not disregard the occurrences depicted in its own medium and thus if a crossover narrative is depicted in the same medium, it would



then have no ontological difference in status than any standalone narratives depicted there. Thus, it would be as binding, if not more, considering the fictional reality depicted by a crossover effect entities (and thus the fictional realities) of several separate texts. In the CSI-Without a Trace crossover for example, as the mediums of both participants are utilized to present an episode of the transfictional narrative, there simply is no escaping from accepting the consequences, thus from the merging effect of the crossover (as well as from accepting the occurrences of the story into the canon) for both texts.

#### **4.3.1.1 Singular Meetings or Grand Narratives**

With the coexistence of the participants of a crossover in the same universe system, bounded by the same fictional reality established through the very transfictional act; then there is a narratively strategic question regarding whether the transfictional meeting in question is desired to be a one-off occasion or is it to serve as the building block of a grand narrative.

According to Ryan (2008), by migrating fictional entities across different texts, a mosaic of texts emerges, an argument supported by Freeman (2016) as well. These text systems that emerge as the result of such transfictional narratives can be fictionally meaningful either in their collective solitude or as a chapter in build-up to a larger narrative goal. The CSI-Without a Trace crossover for example is a singular occasion. The narrative that results from the transfictional meeting of the characters of the respective texts is contained within the crossover story in the sense that it starts in the first episode of the crossover and finishes in the second. However, crossover narratives can also relate to a larger mosaic.

A good example here would be the narrative strategy employed by Marvel for its silver screen movies, that it refers to as its cinematic universe. Sub-categorized

strategically into phases, the transfictional connections that are made through crossovers in these movies connect the distinct texts with each other, underlining several points. First of these is the inter-connection of these texts which serves as the reminder of their entities as coexistents. And secondly, such crossovers always remind the audience that all the events in various Marvel movies relate to the same fictional reality, therefore each minor or major occasion in these movies affecting and limiting possibilities for the movies to follow. The movies in each phase of the Marvel cinematic universe are accordingly interconnected through crossovers and they resume plot points introduced by each other, which is yet another sign of transfictionality, showing that these texts relate to the same fictional reality, to eventually come together in phase-ending major story events that are The Avengers movies which are, no coincidence, highly-marketed major crossover stories in nature; connecting and concluding the respective (seemingly standalone) texts that are their building blocks which become the participants to these events.

**Figure 4.16:** The Avengers Assembling in the Climactic Scene of the Marvel Movie  
Avengers: Endgame



Source: Avengers: Endgame (2019), Marvel Studios, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

#### **4.3.1.2 Crossover Induced Merge as Transfictional Expansion**

This framework has argued, with ontological and narrative evidence, that with true crossovers necessitating no-contradiction between the participants for a narrative of the kind to be executable, such a narrative establishes that its participants are coexistents bound by the same fictional reality. When this normative narrative model for crossovers is employed, the canonical nature of the produced narrative effectively enables the narrative in question to earn expansional (in transfictionality context) status in regards to the texts and their fictional realities (now merged into one) that are involved in it.

This work has previously elaborated that crossovers are most fitting, in nature, to the transfictional act of transportation/transposition (see Dolezel 1998). On the other hand, Dolezel had explained the transfictional type of expansion as extending the scope of a narrative by prolonging the time covered by the original story (Dolezel 1998), a notion explained previously as most seen in prequels and sequels and in other such direct (sometimes retro) continuations. Ryan (2013) makes the argument, referring to Dolezel's transfictionality types, that expansion is more world preserving than the other transfictionality types as it doesn't require changing the facts of the original story. Actually, transportation does not make a necessary change either, as a loyal to the original, non-contradictive transportation is the transfictional act that is employed in crossovers. However it is also a valid risk that a non-loyal transportation (without preserving the essential facts of the original entity) would pose a risk regarding the entity in question. On the other hand, the transfictionality type of displacement/modification (see Dolezel 1998), as understandable by its very name, is straight up changing the facts of the original, hence associated by this framework not with crossovers but with collages in which not the transfictional migration of original fictional entities but purpose-built dummy counterparts is of the question. In support of this view harbored by this framework, Ryan (2013), regarding transmedia projects,

argues modification to be much less common in such projects as she states that it threatens the integrity of the original storyworlds unlike expansion that respects it.

In light of these arguments, with the narrative of a crossover (one that fits the specific definition by this framework) being canonical for all its participants, its narrative then also serves as a transfictional expansion to the texts that participate in it. Ryan (2013) reminds that texts that are connected through the transfictionality relationship of expansion refer to the same storyworld as the original (text which presented the fictional reality in question in the first place). This is a situation which creates two additional dynamics. Both are important narrative side-effects, requiring artistic care and attention, that are brought along the crossover ramification of a permanent merge.

#### **4.3.1.3 Reality Principle/Minimal Departure Dynamics for Crossovers**

The models of Reality Principle and Minimal Departure (which is built upon the former) by Walton (1990) and Ryan (1991) respectively have previously been elaborated by this work while explaining the notion of fictional reality. In summary, these models accounted for an audience reception dynamic of a fictional text and argue that readers/audience imagine a fictional world to be as similar to the actual world they know and make changes only explicitly stated by the text. Deliu (2015), regarding minimal departure, states that readers can not know about things that are not explicitly stated in the text (apart from by exercising the mentioned dynamics) because apart from the text itself, there is no material to retrieve the information from. However, with transfictional connections established through canonical crossovers having expansional quality, then a crossover, by narrative reason, has the power to override the audience assumptions made regarding a text with the explicitly given facts by another text connected with it through such a crossover.

Pavel argues that fictional worlds come in sizes and that their size is directly related to the textual size (Pavel 1986). This is the case here, as all texts that refer to the same fictional reality through transfictionality help increase the textual size and thus further completing the related fictional world. Crossovers have that effect and this is another peculiar ability of a crossover; as an ontological causation, explicitly given information of one text may automatically fill in the blanks left ambiguous or to the audience assumption in other texts it is transfictionally connected to. In cases in which one of the participants of a crossover has provided explicit information about a matter others had not, the situation is then binding for all participants and such a dynamic have the potential to be problematic in some cases.

For example, lets assume that three works made a crossover and two of them had never explicitly given information about the state of fish in their storyworlds and thus their audiences had exercised minimal departure and therefore had come to expect the fish in those fictional worlds to be exactly as they are in real world. Yet the third participant had, in their previous narratives, explicitly stated that all fish in its storyworld are carnivorous and very dangerous. Suddenly, with their mutual recognition of each other's fictional realities through the crossover; a new text, thus a source is available to attain the information about the first two participant's presented fictional realities and depicted worlds that was not previously available. And until this is fixed with some kind of retcon information, now all fish, in all three storyworlds are by ontological reason carnivorous and dangerous.

Therefore when entering a normative, canonical crossover, all sides must be as competently aware of each other's presented realities as can be to avoid such trouble or risk forever having carnivorous fish in the seas of their storyworlds.

#### **4.3.1.4 Reciprocal Responsibility**

The final item to mention regarding the permanent merge outcome is not a consequence of the ramification but a narrative strategy that this framework will present as a tool to help uphold consistency through texts that are transfictionally connected under one fictional reality through crossovers. To be able to ground the proposition better, it would be productive to return to the example that is the St. Elsewhere controversy.

Throughout the six seasons worth of narrative of St. Elsewhere there was no indication that the depicted events were anything but (fictionally) real and the controversial series finale was a major surprise to the fans as well as to the cast of the show. In fact even interviews with actors and actresses of St. Elsewhere regarding the final twist of the series reveals that (see, Snierston 2012) they had no idea that such an ending was going to be the case. Their statements reveal a mixed reception of the ending among themselves as well with several of them reporting their disappointment in such an ending. Further statements by William Daniels and Bonnie Bartlet (from the cast of St. Elsewhere) reveal their view that producers wanted to end the show in a way that was conclusive, which not allow a comeback or spin-offs. While it is of course speculation, the given statements, as well as the serious tone of the show prior to the finale provide grounds for the argument that the producers themselves did not have the idea to end St. Elsewhere with such an ending until a very late point. In his objections to the Westphall Hypothesis, Weatherson (2004) argues that the producers of the other shows, fictional realities of which came under question, obviously did not mean for their shows to be set in Tommy Westphall's imagination. In one of the items of his criticism, Weatherson argues that rejecting the Westphall Hypothesis is more in line with the wishes of the authors (and for the fictional realities they determined for their works) whose works are connected to St. Elsewhere by crossovers than accepting it. Given that the authorities that be of those shows that crossed over with

St. Elsewhere quite likely did not know that St. Elsewhere would end the way it did and considering the authorities of the shows that crossed over with the shows that crossed over with St. Elsewhere had even less knowledge and part in the this conflict, the error causing the inconsistency by contradicting the individual fictional realities of the related works is of St. Elsewhere's.

This is the point that this work will also argue as the main reason of the St. Elsewhere controversy. Though the narrative conflict and the resulting ontological controversy are complicated in nature, their cause is simple to pinpoint in the failure or recklessness of the text of St. Elsewhere in not respecting the fictional realities of the shows it crossed over and thus was connected with by presenting narrative contradicting with the fictional realities they continue(d) to present, effectively not upholding non-contradiction.

To prevent such narrative problems and conflicts, this framework will propose a requirement that it will term as "**Reciprocal Responsibility**". The canonical state and thus continuity, cements permanency to the events and thus to the recognitions made in and for a crossover story and to be able to uphold them, future narratives of the texts, respective fictional realities of which have merged through a crossover then carry the responsibility of not contradicting the standalone narratives of the titles that now coexist in the same fictional reality.

This work has explained the notion that, crossovers have the power to establish the fictional realities of individual works that participates in them as coexistents in the same fictional universe. This requires, ideally, a level of consistency in the pasts of the works crossing over which this work has explained in the sense of limitations in similarity that enable or forbid the crossovers of respective works through whether relations of accessibility stand between them in possible worlds models. Such consistency must also regard the futures of these works as well. In principle, by the execution of a crossover, respective texts recognize each other's fictional realities and

accept the placement of the respective works within the same fictional universe. This should bring, to the future standalone narratives of all related works in a crossover, the responsibility of not contradicting with the fictional realities and the facts of the other works crossed over with have presented and continues to present. If for example work A (taking place in city 1) and work B (taking place in city 2) do participate in a crossover, recognizing the fictional realities of each other, work A, in a future respective story of its own should not depict a narrative in which city 2 is destroyed without the knowledge and permission of work B as such an event would very much contradict the fictional reality work B continues to present. This notion of two-way responsibility for maintaining inter-work continuity is defined by the term "**Reciprocal Responsibility**" by this framework.

It is understandable that continuing an individual narrative with constant attention given to maintaining reciprocal responsibility might sound inconvenient to a number of content creators, however considering that fictional narratives, even those which have come to share a universe with several other texts through transfictional connections, do not frequently narrate events with enough size and force to effect all the works bound by the same fictional reality, the situation may not be as limiting as it might seem.

The rarity of narrative events or occurrences of such proportion can be shown by the fact that incidents such as the complication created by the St. Elsewhere's final do not come into question very often and in fact remain anomalies. Also for authors and content creators, maintaining fictional universes containing a large number of coexisting works (such as those of Marvel or DC Comics), the fact remains that when a narrative event of considerable significance which will effect a certain number of related works is going to be depicted, crossovers in the narratives of events of such caliber is often executed anyway, eliminating the need for the individual application of reciprocal responsibility as the event is experienced by all related parties at the same time through a crossover story or through well managed interconnected



individual stories anyway.

It is a fact that upholding reciprocal responsibility and maintaining inter-work continuity require additional demands as well as being care and attention requiring tasks to an already complicated and delicate beauty that is narrative arts. However, such demands are not only an ontological necessity brought about by the strict philosophical understanding of fictional reality and transfictionality but the adequate and careful application of this transfictional responsibility also has proven to result in critically acclaimed and fan favourite narratives and the lack of it in controversy.

#### **4.3.2 Single-Side Recognition**

Another possible result of a fictional crossover narrative may be that the canonicity of a crossover and thus the respective fictional realities of the participating texts are recognized by not all but one (or more) participant(s) of the story. While complex in nature and seemingly in violation of the crossover qualification requirements proposed by this framework, this item is a delicate occasion.

The likelihood of such a consequence is very much dependent on the setting medium chosen for the crossover narrative. If the setting medium of the crossover story is that of one of the participants; while the hosting text, by ontological obligation, makes the recognition, the guest parties might choose to disregard the canonicity of the crossover event. As the transfictional narrative in question is depicted in the medium of the host through which the hosting text also relays its own standalone, canonical narratives; by reason, the crossover narrative gains the same ontological status as any of these other narratives, installments of the host. Such a dynamic does not allow the host to disregard the canonicity of the crossover or to discriminate it from its routine narratives, at least without going up against ontological reason and causing narrative controversy. However, for as long as the

effects of the crossover is not depicted or until the mention of it is made in their own texts, the guests of the crossover narrative can hide behind plausible deniability in terms of the canonicity of the crossover for their text(s).

It should also be noted that such a dynamic can also occur in a similar way if the setting medium is a crossover specific medium as well. The difference then is that there is not a host-guest relationship between the participant texts and therefore there is not a necessary recognition required by the host. With all participants being guests to a crossover-specific host, some participant texts of the crossover narrative may canonize the occurrences of the transfictional narrative, recognizing the coexistence of their depicted worlds in the same fictional universe with those of the other participant texts, bound by the same fictional reality while others may not.

While not an ideal situation and indeed a curious narrative complexity, and though a rare occasion, a possible one. In cases in which the recognition is not mutual, a dilemma as to what kind of transfictionality has actually occurred becomes the question. This framework will now utilize examining a specific example to elaborate the possible ways that such a narrative situation can play out.

Spider-Man TV series, an animated feature that became an iconic narrative of the superhero genre for the 1990's generation was produced by Fox Broadcasting Company in cooperation with Marvel and aired on Fox Kids, continuing for 5 seasons between 1994 and 1998. Alongside the X-MEN animated series, it was a successful venture, adapting hit comic storylines on to television, laying the roots of the foray of superheroes to television and then to the silver screen, as well as introducing a whole generation to the genre and to the iconic characters which were to feature more and more prominently on the cultural scene. In addition to a solid, grounded narrative that satisfied the rules and requirements for a children's show while still maintaining a serious tone and harboring a plot structure around important and delicate themes, the Spider-Man animated series also served as a host as it introduced several other

important Marvel characters to its audience. Characters such as The Punisher, Craven the Hunter, Morbius, Blade, Dr. Strange all made appearances (some, recurring appearances) through the five seasons of the hit show. However, the most significant of these transfictional appearances in the show, in relation to this study, is those made by the superhero squad of X-MEN and Iron Man (alongside whom appeared his friend and ally War Machine). These two guests to the show were not just appearances but can easily be considered as crossovers, as unlike the other characters that had made appearances in the show, both X-MEN and Iron Man also had feature animated series, native texts of their own, aired also by Fox Kids, in the same time period.

**Figure 4.17:** Appearances by Wolverine and the rest of the X-MEN (left) and Iron Man (right) in the Spider-Man Animated TV Series



Source: Spider-Man TV Series (1994-1998), Marvel Entertainment Group, Fox Kids Network.

So was the X-MEN and Iron Man, War Machine duo that appeared in the Spider-Man animated series were the very characters crossing over from their native texts and therefore did Spider-Man of the said animated series existed in the same universe as those shows or were they other versions of these characters that existed in the fictional reality depicted by the Spider-Man show? A question that is not a simple one to answer because even though there is evidence to suggest that these are the very

characters crossing over from their own texts, the mention of these crossover, or their occurrences, were not made in those other texts, making these occasions great examples for the crossover ramification of single-side recognition.

Depending on the narrative strategy, or the ontological understanding, that will be employed by the recognizing sides for their future standalone narratives; the crossover ramification of single-side recognition may take the shape of two different outcomes, both of which will now be explained by this framework in relation to the Spider-Man and X-MEN/Iron Man crossovers.

#### **4.3.2.1 Seemingly Single-Side Merge**

Let's start with the possibility that these transfictional narratives were indeed crossovers; narratives that satisfy the rules of crossover qualification presented by this framework. The fact that these narratives were produced with the permission and involvement of the intellectual property rights holders and that the authority to determine fictional reality regarding all these characters was present in the conduction of these narratives are good indicators of this. Moreover, the background fictional realities of these characters and their traits and appearances (apart from a few small visual, likely production related, inconsistencies) were imported intact are also promising signs. Another quality in these transfictional appearances pointing towards a true transfictional transportation is that for Spider-Man's crossovers with both the X-MEN and Iron Man, the actual voice artists of these characters from their native texts were recruited, further upholding the original qualities of the migrating characters.

The point then comes to canonicity, whether the occurrences and the fictional reality of the crossover is recognized by the participants which will constitute the very variable deciding whether the fictional realities shall be merged and worlds of

the texts placed in unification. Because the narratives of these meetings between Spider-Man and X-MEN or Iron Man occurred in episodes of Spider-Man's native text; this hosting text, by necessity, has to recognize the canonicity of and accepts the consequences of the crossover narrative for that of its own. Indeed the occurrences of the crossover remain remembered for the fictional reality of the Spider-Man animated series, effecting the characters and the events of the succeeding episodes. Also allowing a further crossover episode (an adaptation of the Secret Wars storyline) in the last season of the Spider-Man animated series in which both the X-MEN and Iron Man (among other characters) also appear.

The text of Spider-Man, then, can choose to accept, and act from then on, as though its residing fictional reality has merged with those of the other texts that participated in the crossover. The matter then becomes more about possible rejection, non-recognition than it is about acceptance. Because, if the appearances of X-MEN and Iron Man characters were transfictional migrations, explainable by the transfictionality relation of transportation, then the fictional reality of the resulting text should also effect those texts and thus needs to be recognized.

Regarding this dynamic, it should be noted however that the fact that some parties of a crossover have not shown explicit recognition of the crossover narrative in question do not necessarily mean that they do not recognize it at all, unless they explicitly contradict the occurrences of or outright reject the canonicity of the crossover story in an explicit way in their own narratives. Returning to the conceptualization of non-contradiction by the possible worlds theory that conflicting accounts can not coexist at the same time (Ryan 2013), as long as there is not explicit contradiction, the lack of explicit recognition is not enough to outright reject the possibility. In our example, what is seemingly non-recognition by the texts of X-MEN or Iron Man may simply be that there just did not come a point in the standalone narratives of those texts which necessitated an explicit statement of the recognition. Though there was not clear recognition, there is also not a clear, explicit

rejection of the canonicity of these crossovers, nor any explicit contradictions to these crossovers are depicted by those narratives. Therefore, the element of non-contradiction retains the possibility of the recognition. However, understandably, to prevent complications and confusion, this framework would recommend that it would be best for all participants of a crossover to explicitly show, in their native texts that succeed the crossover, that they have made the recognition.

In such a situation the crossover ramification of permanent merge, explained in the previous section, is actually again of the case, the only difference being that one (or some) of the participants just have not explicitly stated, or depicted narratives showing their recognition. But what if some of the participants of the crossover narrative outright reject making the recognition or depict individual narratives that contradict it. Now that is recipe for complication and narrative controversy.

In that case, most importantly, a true crossover can not be argued to be of the case as, if one (or more) of the participants outright reject recognizing the fictional reality of the crossover, it is not really possible to talk about the transfictional migration of the actual fictional characters from their native texts. In the case of such non-recognition by one or several parties involved, the hosting text or any other involved text(s) recognizing the canonicity of the crossover may also choose to accept as if a merge has occurred and can show the necessary care in their future standalone narratives not to contradict the fictional realities that the non-recognizing parties of the crossover continues to depict. However without the mutuality of such a respect, this single-side love affair may be more problematic than reasonable in terms of narrative continuity as well as being ontologically meaningless.

Understandably, then non-mutual recognitions cause considerable complexities in determining who and what is real for who and who and what is not, for the audience, and even for the producers themselves when narratives having involved in such situations build up more installments over time. And these kind of complexities only

grow in relation to the textual size, eventually coming to a point that they start creating narrative controversies and becoming problematic for audience comprehension of the fictional realities that suffer such problems. DC Comic's major crossover comic event Crisis on Infinite Earths is worthy of mention in this specific regard. One of the main strategic decisions by DC for undertaking such a large narrative crossover event was to solve the problem of this kind of complexities that had occurred on multiple places in its universe and the residing fictional realities that DC Comics titles existed within (see Sims 2014, Tucker 2017). Years worth of storytelling had amassed and individual ontological complexities of the kind had eventually caused a snowball effect as the continued storylines included more and more contradictions, resulting in audience confusion and criticism. The very purpose of the Crisis storyline and the crossover event that resulted ,which has become one of the most celebrated narratives of modern popular culture, was to remedy these problems and to place all the continuing DC titles on a mutual ground, establishing clear boundaries and making necessary connections where they lacked, even if it was to the price of killing several liked characters and discontinuing some titles.

The strategic narrative decision of accepting a single-side merge is not an ideal approach, nor a productive one as continuing an individual narrative in respect and with non-contradiction to one or more other distinct narratives that do not accept such a connection is only a recipe for complication. However, non-mutual recognition can also occur in a more moderate, easier to explain and less likely to be confusing shape which is more often the case. A way that is almost always implicitly implied and almost never explicitly explained by the narratives that employ it.

#### 4.3.2.2 Counterpart Dynamics

Now let's make the other assumption and offer a different explanation of how a single-side recognition of the canonicity and the fictional reality of a crossover may work, again through the example of the X-MEN and Iron Man characters' appearances in the Spider-Man text.

For a distinct character to appear in a different text than its own, the said character does not necessarily need to cross over from its native text through transfictional migration. When a crossover is treated as non-canonical for a number of non-recognizing participants, but canonical for the recognizing side(s); without the mutuality of the recognition, but with the canonical nature of the event for the recognizing text(s), alternative supplements for the fictional entities of the non-recognizing side(s) is of the question for the recognizing side(s).

The fact that the native text of a participant may not recognize the fictional reality of a crossover can then be attributed to the argument that the appearing character(s) in such a crossover might not be transfictional migrants from that specific native text but another version of the said character that exists in the fictional reality of the hosting text of the crossover. Skolnick and Bloom (2006) remind that sameness of the character is not necessarily a condition for a single (fictional) world. That would mean that, the fact that the appearing character has a native text of its own, does not necessarily mean that any appearance of the said character in another text than its own establishes that the transfictional relationship of transportation exists between those texts. Remember that other Marvel characters who had native texts elsewhere (in other media, like in comics) such as Dr. Strange and The Punisher also appeared in the Spider-Man animated series but unlike these characters, what had caused the expectation of a crossover from the appearances of the X-MEN and Iron Man were that these characters also had animated series present in the same network, at the same time. Their native texts, in the relevant form, were just easier to pinpoint to



expect a transfictional connection from. In this sense, appearances by other characters like Dr. Strange in the Spider-Man animated series were also similar to crossovers because these characters had native texts and other distinct continued residences as well, none of which explicitly recognized the appearance by their characters in the said text. Therefore, the most valid argument in these kind of cases would be that such situations do not constitute the crossing over of the actual fictional characters but the existence of counterpart versions of these characters in the fictional reality in which they appear.

**Figure 4.18:** Dr. Strange Makes an Appearance in the Spider-Man Animated TV Series



Source: Spider-Man Episode “Dr. Strange” (1996), Marvel Entertainment Group, Fox Kids Network.

What separates these counterpart characters from surrogate entities in collages (as termed by this framework) is the officiality of their existence. Even though these characters may not be the actual ones that exist in the fictional reality of their native texts (or texts of their continued residences), their appearances in other texts occur with the permission (and sometimes the involvement) of the powers that be that has

the authority to determine fictional reality regarding these fictional entities. The transfictionality relationship of displacement, as defined by Dolezel (1998), however remains fitting (as in collages) as these kind of counterpart characters do often differ from the actual fictional characters of which they refer to.

Such meetings between fictional entities of different texts than do not necessarily constitute crossovers as there is not a specific migration of the actual character, hence the single-side recognition of the meeting occurs. Therefore, referring back to transfictionality relationships, this kind of a crossover(like) narrative is accepted as an expansional text for the host (and for any other recognizing parties) but not so for the non-recognizing text(s), which then can be argued not to be a participant but simply counterpart versions of their entities do appear in the narrative. With the entities of the non-recognizing sides not being participants, those texts than can freely choose not to canonize the crossover story and its consequences.

This dynamic then is more about intertextuality than transfictionality. According to Freeman (2016), intertextuality is the operation of media texts in relation to other texts and in these cases, it is then the fictional reality of another text and its entities that set the reference point for the counterpart entities that are to appear in the place of those that they refer to.

Therefore when not all participants of a crossover recognize the fictional reality of the occasion, there are two possibilities. First is that the seemingly non-recognizing parties may actually be recognizing but simply may not have ever explicitly stated their recognition which is not problematic for as long as they do not depict contradiction. And the second is that the appearance of entities in the crossover that seems to be migrating from these non-recognizing texts may be counterpart versions that exist in the fictional reality of the crossover text and therefore the native texts of the "seeming" participants do not need to make any recognitions anyway.

### 4.3.3 A Branching Reality

A common situation for "What-If" themed crossover narratives (explained previously by this framework, in the section for the Rule of Canon) and almost exclusively a consequence of crossovers that employ a narrative-specific setting medium, this crossover ramification accounts for cases in which the transfictional narrative does not effect the respective fictional realities of the native texts of its participants but establishes a branching fictional reality of its own.

These narratives can constitute exceptional cases that still satisfies the rules of crossover qualification presented by this framework (see What-If Crossovers section) with their non-canonical nature stemming not from the non-recognition by its participants but from the self-contained nature of their fictional reality which is a specific narrative strategy. The resultation of this kind of a crossover narrative is neither the permanent merge of the fictional realities belonging to the native texts, characters of which appear in the crossover, nor it is an altogether disregard for the occurrence of the events of the narrative.

In the context of narratology, these type of crossover narratives do not facilitate the transfictional migration of specific entities between each others native texts or to a common destination, but more precisely, these narratives depict a new fictional reality in which the participants of the crossover coexist. According to Skolnick and Bloom (2006), regarding a two participant example, these kind of narrative crossovers occur in a third world. Not in the respective worlds of the participants but in another one in which they interact. Such an approach protects the fictional realities of the native texts (or the texts of continued residence) of the participants from the consequences of the crossover's occurrences. A great example to this strategy can be the rare intercompany crossovers conducted between Marvel and DC Comics. To be able to produce such narratives without merging the fictional realities of their distinct universes, these two companies have resorted to depicting another fictional reality in

which versions of the characters of the two rival companies coexist. Referred as Earth-7642 (more frequently as Crossover Earth) in accordance to the multiverse setting of these comic producers, this fictional reality has been utilized through the years as a platform to conduct transfictional narratives, facilitating meetings between Marvel and DC characters such as Batman-The Punisher, Batman-Spider-Man and Superman-Spider-Man (see All New Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe 2006).

**Figure 4.19:** Covers of Various Titles That Take Place in the Marvel-DC Shared Universe, Designated Earth-7642



Source: Marvel Comics (2006), ALL-NEW OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE.

Regarding the entities, characters that appear in these crossovers, two different methods of importation can be employed. Entities may appear in these narratives, through a non-canonical case of transfictional transportation, depicted faithfully to their existence in their native texts in terms of background facts and fictional reality. Another way might be intertextually importing the general features of the character, in that case, transfictional modification is at play.

With such narratives establishing a new branching reality, diverging from those of its participants, the occurrences in these narratives are not canonical for the native texts of their participants. However, these generated fictional realities by these kind of narratives establish canons of their own. Parker (2013) reminds that long-running and expansive franchises (texts) develop complexities and inconsistencies over time, which in turn make it difficult for them to depict a singular canon. A branching reality provides a possible remedy to that, at the very least a means to continue the narrative without causing further complication and contradiction. With a new fictional reality in question, such narratives do not need to maintain consistency with the fictional realities which its participants continue to depict. A branching reality also enables a speculative, "What-If" narrative to be revisited, continued if desired.

To summarize, crossovers that establish branching realities, as explained previously, are exceptions to the necessity of canonicity and their status as crossovers can stand for as long as they have officiality and that their diversion into a new fictional reality is stressed. Such events of narration does have all its participants (in most cases) bring with them their background realities but with the self-contained nature of the narrative, no effect is taken out of it in regards to the original texts of its participants, thus any and all recognitions made in these narratives do not regard other texts but effect only the future narratives (if there are to be) of the newly conceived fictional reality.

#### **4.3.4 Multiverse Approach**

Another possible narrative strategy for the conduction of a crossover may be to place the story in a new, or already existing, fictional reality that the participant entities can transfictionally migrate to, but in such a way that the consequences of the narrative will have limited effect on the respective fictional realities of the participants.

Understandable from its name, adopting the existential understanding of a multiverse, a concept of multiple alternative realities that exist parallel to each other, is rather a fantastic idea. Thus it is no surprise that such a concept is more often utilized by fiction genres of fantasy and science-fiction, however the idea and equally importantly the narrative possibilities that it enables makes it a tempting strategy for large fictional franchises. As a result, the adoption of a multiverse setting has become very popular for comics as it provide content creators with a valid explanation as to the existence of several versions, timelines and thus different fictional realities regarding the same characters. The idea that several alternate (fictional) realities exist and that different versions of a character exist with different timelines, features and canons in these respective realities have not only provided the necessary explanation to the fans but also made way for the producers to publish more varying titles regarding their hit characters.

A multiverse approach also enables producers to have in their hands several fictional realities regarding the same characters which they can choose from when they are to produce new narratives regarding the characters. Especially in the comics industry, it has become a common occasion for producers to state which reality of their depicted multiverse that a specific new title will relate to, a custom that is becoming more and more frequently applied in cinema as well. The multiverse idea, of course spread through adaptation. The concept effectively made its way to animated series, television and cinema as the comics that employed the use of it was adapted to these media.

A prominent example of a multiverse approach is that employed for the character of Spider-Man by Marvel. It is a frequent theme of the series (on multiple media) that multiple versions of Spider-Man exist in different alternate (fictional) realities with different canons and even with varying identities. Sometime referred to as Spider-verse, several hit storylines of the character involves Spider-Man travelling between dimensions (with the aid of allies who have the powers necessary to travel between

these domains), meeting other versions of himself that exist in these other fictional realities and combat villains with the help of his other-dimension counterparts.

**Figure 4.20:** Spider-Man Meeting Alternate Versions of Himself That Exist in Other Dimensions in the Finale Story-Arc of the Spider-Man TV Animated Series



Source: Spider-Man Episode “I Really, Really Hate Clones” (1998), Marvel Entertainment Group, Fox Kids Network.

In terms of crossovers, a multiverse understanding provides a different setting in which the crossover story can take place. The participants entities can, supposed that the necessary fantastic means of travel (dimensional travel, portals, etc.) is provided, can transfictionally migrate to this other fictional reality through transfictional relationship of transportation to play their part in the crossover narrative. In this approach, it is the actual fictional entities coming from their native texts (or texts of their continued residence) to the crossover story, thus their full background fictional reality is brought into the narrative. However with the events of the crossover story not occurring in the fictional reality of a participant, but in another reality through the adoption of a multiverse concept, the consequences of the story is less effective for the participants' respective fictional realities.

This is by no means saying that such an approach ontologically enables the disregard of the occurrences in the crossover, as it very much does not. However the effects are then limited. As the transfictionally appearing entities, characters in such a crossover is the actual fictional characters from their respective texts, the occurrences of these crossovers are ideally, by ontological reason, of canonical nature for the characters. However, with the setting of the story being an alternate reality, different from those of the participants; some more major plot points that would otherwise be of significant effect to the fictional realities of the participants can be dodged with little or no effect. For example, the depiction of large events such as a war, arrival of aliens, major political or social developments in these crossovers do not effect the fictional realities of the participants but remain effective and canonical only for the reality (parallel to those of the participants' through a multiverse concept) in which the crossover narrative occurred. At the completion of the narrative, the participants may return to their own texts, again by utilizing fantastic means of travel that allowed them to travel between realities (dimensions per se) in the first place, and enjoy their lives in the fictional realities of their own which are not effected by those major plot events. However the said characters have witnessed those events that occurred in the alternate reality, timeline thus their memories of those events and any personal effects (emotional, learned information, injury, gained new ability) should remain canonical and accepted as occurred in their own fictional realities as well.

A narrative produced with such an approach requires the distinct fictional realities (different realities, timelines, dimensions of the multiverse) to recognize the existence of each other, however as the very understanding of a multiverse by concept presupposes borders between these realities and limits as to the travel and effect between them, the recognitions made by these realities of each other do not necessitate a merge between them.



A prominent example can again be shown in DC Comics' Crisis on Infinite Earths crossover event, the main plot point of which centers the idea of the DC multiverse. Similarly the television adaptation of the said event provides a good example as the characters in this adaptation move in between different realities of the DC multiverse (television version of it) and the occurrences in these respective realities, while being effective for the travelling characters and the overall story arc, do not directly effect the other realities involved.

**Figure 4.21:** Flash (left, of the DC Cinema Universe) and Flash (right, of the DC Television Universe) Meet in the TV Adaptation of the Crossover Event Crisis on Infinite Earths



Source: Arrow Episode "Crisis on Infinite Earths: Part 4" (2020), Berlanti Productions, DC Entertainment, Warner Bros. Television, The CW.

A final important feature of this approach is the ability of a multiverse understanding in enabling the meeting of different versions of characters. It is not an uncommon narrative theme for iconic heroes to face and combat an evil version of themselves that exist in a different reality where things have clearly unfolded differently. This dynamic of multiverse crossovers also allow for narratives that would otherwise be impossible to conduct without posing major consequences for the

fictional realities of continued titles. For example, in a multiverse crossover, a character may meet, fight and even kill another character of a different reality without the very act having an effect on the killed character that continues to exist in the fictional reality of its mainline continuity.

#### **4.3.5 No-Merge**

A final approach to a crossover narrative, one that is unnatural by ontological reason, but yet still possible by practical application, is the complete disregard of the occurrence of the crossover story by the future narratives of the participating sides which then results in the limitation of the fictional reality of the crossover in that of its own.

For the context of transfictionality; this approach is undesirable as it does take away from the legitimacy of the crossover narrative, as without the recognition of the crossover by its participants, no transfictional migration of the actual fictional entities is of the case. For crossovers conducted in official capacity, this situation results in the previously explained ramification of a branching reality. Note that such a narrative decision disregards the crossover story from any and all seemingly related respective canons of its participants, disallowing any plot lines emerged in the crossover to be continued by any standalone future narratives of the participants.

As explained, this ramification results in a branching reality for official crossovers conducted with the permission (and possibly with the involvement) of the powers that be that hold the authority to determine fictional reality regarding the appearing characters and other similar entities. However while this ramification is a choice that such a narrative can make in terms of narrative strategy, it is an unavoidable consequence and is bound to be the case for narratives that aspire to be crossovers yet are termed collages by their inability to satisfy the crossover qualification propositions presented by this work.

With collages not having the authority to determine fictional reality regarding the original fictional entities they mean to include, any narratives of the kind can not serve as consequential points of connection between the authentic fictional realities of the fictional entities; purpose-built surrogates of which they include in their narratives. In direct relation, the occurrences in collages do not effect the canons of the fictional realities of the characters and entities that their purpose-built surrogates intertextually refer to.

In a collage, regardless of the size of the production, occurrences do not transfictionally effect the original entities nor their fictional realities. Whether the collage in question be a mainstream cinema movie such as *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, a professional production such as the Machinima mash-ups or a work of fan fiction with intertextual elements, these narratives do not effect the original fictional realities of the included characters as the appearances of distinct characters in these collages, as elaborated before, are not the transfictional migrations of the respective characters, but surrogate entities in intertextual reference to them, produced specifically for the narrative at hand.

#### **4.3.6 Ramifications Wrap-Up**

According to the theorization of the Crossover Framework; these are the five possible ramifications that a crossover (or similar in nature) narrative can have on the texts and their fictional realities that are involved in it. Which one of these items is going to be case depends on several factors, as explained, such as the canonical status of the narrative and the setting medium employed. But most importantly, which ramification is going to be of the eventual consequence (in many cases) depends on the narrative strategy chosen.

As explained previously, a narrative, as it moves forward, ontologically enables and prohibits certain possibilities for its path through its depiction of stories. In direct relation, whether a relation of accessibility stands between the world that a narrative depicts and a conceptualized world of a hypothetical progression of the plot is affected by the occurrences depicted in the narrative and how these events effect the fictional reality in question. Therefore, in the context of fiction; most depictions in a narrative and in the context of the real world; artistic and productional narrative decisions considerably effect what will and will not be possible for the future (as well as the past, for retroactive continuations) of the said narrative. Zhang (2018) argues that possible worlds ideology can be referred as a tool by which hypothesis about future (or past) state of affairs and corresponding plans of action can be formed. In a similar manner, the modal sets and the ontological understanding of the model can be utilized to reach understandings of how fictional depictions and the narrative strategy decisions, for the relaying of these fictional occurrences, affect the text in question.

The intention of the Crossover Framework is then accordingly to provide a literal framework; one not only defines and specifies the transfictional act of crossovers, but one through the application of which also enables to predict the possible short and long term consequences of the executed crossover for the texts and their fictional realities involved in it.

The realm of fictional realities and the worlds that they reside over are mysterious and magnificent terrains and those that spend their lives and efforts both for the artistic production and academic study of these fields, as stated before are often walking on thin ice as they juggle between the reality of the actual and the fictional constantly. Walking on ice is not an easy task which requires care, delicacy and skill. Accordingly, the theorization efforts of this framework is meant to provide a map for those that do the ice walking so they at least will not have to also deal with navigation while trying not to crack the ice. Which is an important matter here as cracking the ice in this context means disturbing the ontological fabric of an acting relative reality.

## CONCLUSION

Why do crossovers happen? There can be many answers to this. Let's start with reasons that are on the fictional level. It can be causational. If you could visit Gotham city (a fictional character, transfictionally, can and may) and made the mistake of committing a crime at night, there would be the chances of meeting the Dark Knight. It can be of necessity; people, in certain situations, need people of certain expertise. Just like Grissom, a crime scene investigator and Agent Malone, a special agent tasked with missing person cases, needed each other to solve a crime that necessitated the expertise of both detectives. It can be caused of the most noble intentions such as numerous heroes, coming together as The Avengers, unifying their powers to defend our planet.

Then on the productional side, real life concerns and ambitions come into play, resulting in crossovers. Levy (quoted in Jenkins 2003) mentions the appeal of some texts as cultural attractors as they bring diverse communities together by producing common ground. A definition that can be argued to be in effect for crossovers which become texts that bring together the audiences of several discrete works or franchises. The fact that The Avengers movies are able to attract the separate audiences of all the individual heroes that appear in them is one of the very reasons that they break box office records. Scolari (2009) similarly argues that media producers tend to be large corporations that have investments in a lot of different media and franchises, thus connections in-between them make economic sense. Such as the crossovers between sister CSI series (and with other related series such as Without Trace) inviting the audience of one to subscribe to the others as well. Crossovers can be of necessity in the productional sense as well, remember that the Crisis on Infinite Earths crossover was produced with the very intention of simplifying the DC universe in a certain way to facilitate the planned future narratives in a more audience-friendly way.

Finally, crossovers occur of bravery. Both in the fictional and productional senses. What requires more bravery in this world (or in a fictional world) than facing your greatest opponents in order to protect something precious. Such as Batman does by facing a fearsome Superman in the Dark Knight Returns comic (and in the Batman vs. Superman movie adapted from that very title). A bravery of the same kind is also required from the authors, artists, producers of this kind of narratives as well; as what can be more artistically brave than having the flagship character of your presented fictional reality face that of a rival producer instead of continuing a distant, cold competition. Isn't every Marvel vs. DC crossover such an example?

Regardless of the reasoning for their conceptions, crossovers have come to be prominent works of narrative arts, most often resulting in some of the most influential major stories told in modern fiction and popular culture. With the acclaim that crossovers have come to enjoy in the contemporary narrative industry and considering that numerous works having executed this act have become fan favourite texts, it was due time that crossovers were given the attention they deserve in their academical study and theorization.

The first step of this work in this regard was the presentation of a framework with the intention being to provide a narrow definition for a crossover in order to remedy the confusion that had long existed in the literature regarding the matter. In order to achieve that, the produced framework presented three rules for crossover qualification that a fictional narrative must satisfy to be defined as a crossover. The requirements by these rules, effectively defend a normative position that necessitates a work of the kind: 1. to include entities of different nativity, 2. to have through intellectual property rights ownership (or permission by the powers that be), the power to allow for the transfictional migration of and to determine fictional reality regarding the participating entities, and 3. to ideally remain of canonical stance for all texts involved, unless it is desired by narrative strategy to establish a new branching reality.

Throughout the presentation of this definitive, normative framework, the angle of approach has been the notion of fictional reality, through which all fictional texts and entities gain and enjoy their relative reality. In regards to the curious concept of transfictionality, fictional reality is of extreme importance for crossovers as it constitutes the very factor which decides whether the appearance of a distinct entity belonging to another distinct text in a fictional work is the actual fictional entity having travelled from its own text or a mere surrogate to hold its place.

The complicated in philosophy and narrativity yet simple in its essence argument here was that for a crossover to occur, an actual crossing over of fictional entities is required, as substitutes need no crossing over anyway. Such a dynamic of course brings along a number of ontological requirements and resulting responsibilities of the kind. Such as recognitions by the participating sides in a crossover of each other's respective fictional realities as well as the placement of all related works in the same narrative terrain, universe; unified under a single (merged) fictional reality. The situation thus requires, effective then on, the responsibility (termed reciprocal responsibility by this work) of non-contradiction by these texts that are transfictionally connected by the crossover into coexistence.

Beyond its efforts to specifically define the act, a further ambition of the Crossover Framework was to present a dedicated model for the conduction possibilities of a crossover between specific texts by assessing crossover compatibility. An adaptation of the Possible Worlds Theory was made for this very purpose to be utilizable in the narratology toolkit as a way to assess crossover compatibility between respective fictional texts. The application of the compatibility model presented by this framework thus can be utilized for both determining whether a crossover idea is ontologically viable and for pinpointing possible narrative complications that can arise from such an act. In addition, the final goal of the Crossover Framework was to theorize the ontological and narrative ramifications of a crossover for the fictional realities of the texts involved in it. The produced ideology of ontological

understanding and the presentation of the resulting five possible ramification types can be taken into consideration to provide foresight into the short and long term narrative consequences brought about by the transfictionality that occurs through crossovers.

The execution, limitations and the requirements of some of the propositions of this work might seem idealistic or difficult to narratively exercise, however this work claims that the liberty of choosing to ignore such actions (necessities according to ontological reason) has been a luxury of the past for the content creators, only made possible through the limited technologies available to the audiences of their works and that the execution of such liberties, in the present day, is viewed, especially by dedicated followers of any work of fiction, as recklessness.

Content producers used to be able to get away with much more inconsistencies even within their works, let alone considering contradictions with works of others transfictionally connected with theirs. In the past, if the audience had not read or watched the other work, they were very likely to remain ignorant about the inconsistency in question. However, in the present day, followers of a specific work of fiction start discussing the work merely hours after its release in online forums, fan pages or on their social network pages. IMDB even has the specific topic for continuity errors in the "goofs" part of every movie page listed on it where the inconsistencies (within the work, with prequels/sequels or with interconnected works) spotted in the movie start to be listed as soon as a movie reaches the audience. We live in an era in which the distinction is not as simple as real and fiction. We have come to pay attention to the consistencies of fictional universes, follow the progressions of fictional events with impatience for years and discuss how the ending of one TV series might or might not have effected the fictional realities of other interconnected series, defending various positions. All things, people of not so many years ago would just call "make believe" and not spend any further time contemplating on.



While the ontological sense of a fictional reality exists regardless of its audience perception, the contemporary narrative culture and the texts of its production seem to have created an intuitive sense in its audiences for these relative realities beyond their fictionalities. The audience conception and understanding of fictional reality seems to be catching up to the ontological and philosophical understanding of the concept as audiences have come to expect consequences (and be confused and critical when they lack) from fictional narratives, effectively showing that their enjoyment of these texts have perhaps come beyond suspension of disbelief and to the point of accepting their bindingness for the relevant narrative terrains. This is no surprise as people expect bindingness and consequences from reality and fiction always presents a version of its own. And accordingly, the mystery and the delicate nature of crossovers come from the very fact that they present narrative occasions in which such expectancies, ontological or perceptual, come to be for not one but for all texts involved.

With all these philosophical and artistic concerns at play; fictional crossovers account for some of the most difficult fictional narratives to successfully depict yet whenever such an accomplishment was achieved, its reward usually has been a most enjoyable text that will be remembered for the ages. And with the increasing popularity that interconnected narratives which progress parallel to each other in a fictional universe, unified under a fictional reality enjoy in the contemporary narrative scene; it seems that audiences of our day will become only more and more familiar with crossovers. This is an exciting time for narrative arts in terms of transfictionality. With crossovers becoming more prominent in the cultural scene, narratives of the kind are most likely to become more frequent as well as ambitious.

With meetings of distinct characters, belonging to different texts, in the same fiction such as that of Gil Grissom and Jack Malone being remarkable and celebrated occasions and as crossovers have only solidified their position as a popular way of storytelling in the last few decades with clearly promising horizons; it was due time that crossovers were provided the dedicated study and theory that they have earned.

And the Crossover Framework is meant for just that, to elaborately study and then to present necessary model and theory to help facilitate successful conduction of these transfictional narratives as well as ensuring that this beautiful narrative act takes its rightful place in the academical literature of narrative studies.

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