

"INTERMEDIALITY": SOME COMMENTS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS OF A SEARCH CONCEPT¹ - PART II

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5 TOWARDS AN INTERMEDIA NETWORK HISTORY OF CAVES – FIVE RESEARCH AXES

Transformations, Remediations and Media Networks – or an Extension of Intermedia Stories and Histories of Caves

From an intermedia perspective, the quite banal fact that caves are resounding in countless cultural artefacts and events in cultural history brings us to the *question of how caves are remediated and transformed in cultural and media history*. In such a research axis, caves appear to be very volatile phenomena which undergo permanent changes in their interactions with media networks, social and historical circumstances. However, the so far neglected intermedia *sound aspect* of caves seems to be present in a great number of remediations of historical and contemporary caves. For example, the plot of the first radio play *Danger* (BBC, 1924) is located in a coal mine and plays with underground sound patterns. It ends with the rescue of the miners and their return to the upper world.

The “dispositif” (I find the English translation of “apparatus” quite misleading) of the cave plays an important role in 17th century as well as in Rococo high culture and garden architecture. In this period, caves were admired highlights of luxurious gardens, comparable to private pools of our days. *Garden caves* with all their functional loadings and meanings have almost completely disappeared during the past centuries, however, they still are alive and very fashionable as indoor cave-pools or as *virtual caves*. The latter being a technological *precondition* and dispositif for the constitution of all sorts of virtual realities as well as a *result* of digital processes which re-constitute spatial and intermedia reproductions of ‘real’ and historical caves.

¹ I would like to thank very much Brunilda Reichmann (UNIANDRADE, Curitiba) and Anna Wiehl (University of Bayreuth) for their very valuable support in the editing of this article.



ILLUSTRATIONS IX/X
Current attraction of grotto-pools²



ILLUSTRATION XI³
'Dispositif' of a virtual cave

² Examples of 'pool-caves' as 'up-to-date-attractions' (source: <http://desidees.net/plus-belles-grottes-cachent-piscines-luxe-a-labri-regards/>, last consultation 11th March, 2019).

³ 'Dispositif'/apparatus of a virtual cave and constitution of a virtual world (source : <https://www.google.com/search?q=virtual+caves&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjAqLniwqPbAhXS26QKHTILBNQsAQIYQ&biw=1366&bih=631#imgrc=Q6HxlqmUKwExoM>, last consultation 11th March, 2019).

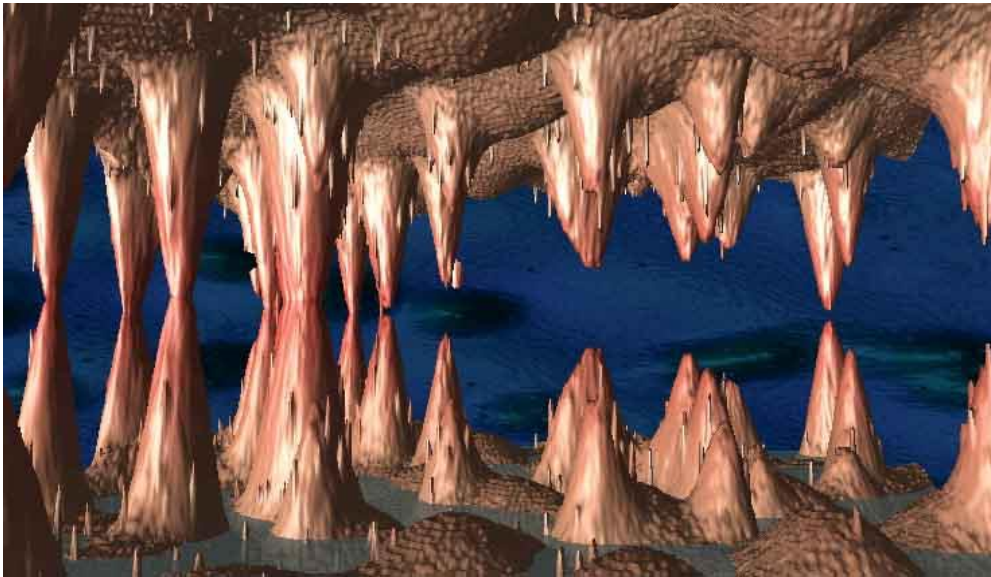


ILLUSTRATION XII⁴

A virtual cave with stalactites and stalagmites

Dispositifs of virtual caves and the constitution of a virtual world

Virtual Caves

Let us briefly return to some further intermedia grotto-transformations in 18th century. An Italian property advertisement prizes the cave or grotto of a villa as a “caverne de Merlin tapissée de milliers de beaux coquillages” (“Merlin’s cave decorated by thousands of beautiful seashells”) and for Margravine Wilhelmine de Bayreuth, the sister of Frederic the Great, caves and grottos have almost become an obsession.

⁴ Ibid.



ILLUSTRATION XIII⁵
Wilhelmine

In and with this picture, Wilhelmine does not only locate herself in 18th century fashion of caves and grottos, but also her literary and musical oeuvre, in which she clearly appeals to the intertextual and mythical denotations and connotations of this special place. From this perspective, Wilhelmine's "cave" evokes archaic and prehistoric feelings, the archetype of the mother's womb, Plato's allegory of the cave and the silhouettes of the cavemen related to our perception of the world, Demeter's travel to hell, Renaissance paintings, the myth of a place of meditation, full of energy, of creativity, of dreams, of readings and of the making of meaning. But, explicitly and implicitly, her cave also refers in an intertextual and intermedia way to literary texts and cultural artefacts of 17th and 18th century, which Wilhelmine knew very well. Here we should mention Fénelon's *Télémaque* (1699), his idealizations of caves, his maxims of education, later ironically de-constructed by Marivaux in his novel *Télémaque travesti* (1736), reproduced by Watteau in his famous paintings, also taken up by Wilhelmine in her poetic writing *Amalthea* (1756) and – not to forget – in her conceptualizations and constructions of caves and grottos in the gardens of the *Éremitage* and *Sans pareil*.

In this sense, Wilhelmine's caves are not only central elements of her stories and also her biography, but very important places and spaces where she experiences multi- and intermedia encounters with arts and literature, where she can leave behind her everyday life and immerses (comparable to current procedures of immersion into video games) into an 'Other World'. Therefore, one can say that her caves and grottos recycle cultural memories and archaic feelings of caves and at the same time give way to creativity and an "effect of life" (Münch) as a result of the encounter of caves with the inter- and multimedia works of art.

⁵ https://www.google.com/search?q=Antoine+Pesne+Markgr%C3%A4fin+Wilhelmine&client=firefox-b-d&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=FB23CYdGTe9ovM%253A%252CsM4_AeM0uP_VBM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kSmclgkAMyV5jdtELVN9vfpz30K_g&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewImv34grHhAhUOEVAKHTDJDhgQ9QEwAXoECAkQBA#imgsrc=FB23CYdGTe9ovM:&vet=1 (last consultation, 2nd April, 2019.)

Genrefications

If we regard genres as interlinked systems of human action, then this implies various interplays of formal, structural, and economic categories as well as patterns of labeling, remembrance and acting within a complex system of media production and reception: Genres function as commodities for producers and users; they guarantee a certain security with regard to our expectations or horizons of expectation, and they provide a guideline with regard to the economic and aesthetic decisions of the producers and prosumers (Bruns, 2008).

Thomas Luckmann (1989) proposed in his article “Prolegomena to a social theory of communicative genres” that the notion and concept of “genres” could and should be used as a fundamental category of sociological and media studies which focus on profiles and social functions of all sorts of genres in societies.

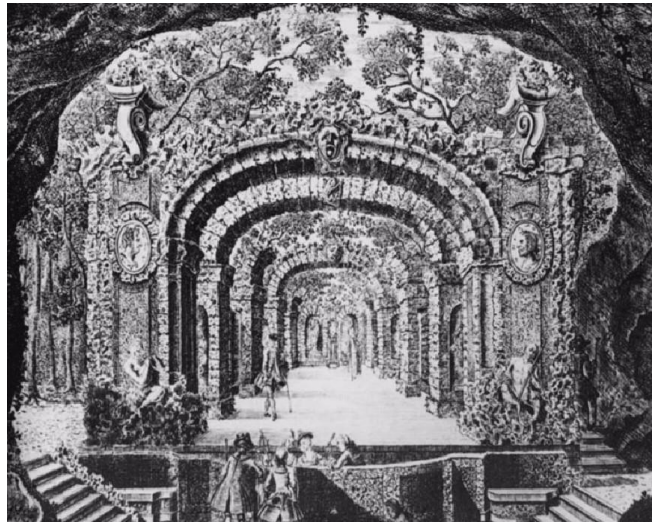
Following Rick Altman (1999), (film-) “genres” could be characterized as:

- *as blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programmes and patterns industry production;*
- *as structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded;*
- *as label, as the name of a category central to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors;*
- *as contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience.* (Altman, 1999, 14)

What do these statements imply for intermedia studies? We think that – in spite of the undisputable relevance of materialities – we cannot and should not forget the important *role of genres*. This goes the more so for our digital age, in which genres have to be considered as essential factors of intermedia processes, interacting in specific historical, technological and social contexts with vectors of power, interests, horizons of expectation of producers and recipients or of prosumers (if we wanted to hint to new patterns of media acting in the digital era). In these days, where *documentaries* become *interactive, participatory, transmedia formats* (Wiehl, 2018; 2019), genres undergo radical changes in terms of producing and consuming, of action and types of participation as well as of fundamental generic outlines we believed to be more or less stable.

Having this in the back of our minds, the notions of “sign”, “meaning”, “signification”, “genre” and “format” are to be considered as valuable categories of intermedia studies which can be applied to prehistorical as well as to contemporary processes in the digital era. Even if many borderlines of so-called old media dissolve in the digital era, the *concepts of genres and formats, of sign configurations, and naturally also of caves and grottos* do not disappear in binary codes; rather, they are permanently remediated and reshaped in digital configurations (also games). In this sense, our remediations of the prehistoric dispositifs and configurations of caves do not disappear in the general virtuality of the ‘digital material’.

Let us shortly illustrate this thesis a second time with Wilhelmine von Bayreuth’s work on and with caves.



ILLUSTRATIONS XIII/XIV

Calypso Grotto in the XVIII century⁶

Calypso Grotto today⁷

In Wilhelmine's 18th century garden and mythical world *Sans Pareil*, a natural cave or grotto was transformed on her account into the *Grotto of Calypso*, in order to serve as a theatre. In other words: A specific 'real' grotto with its spatial and acoustic givens should constitute a frame for immersion, for deep feelings and experiences as well as for the imagination of the Margravine and her guests and should take the audience to Calypso's historical grotto. In this sense, the entire park of *Sans Pareil* with all its magic spaces serves as a dispositif for the imaginary and theatrical *mise-en-scène* (and *mise-en-image*) of stories and of histories. Narrativity and theatricality are doubled in and by Calypso's grotto. So let us keep in mind that with *Calypso's Grotto*, Wilhelmine has realized a trans- and intermedia *mise en abyme* of Odysseus' and Telemaque's stories as well as a Rococo-form of a play within a play. Referring back to our short 'aside' on cross media storytelling, I think that the case of *Calypso's Grotto* makes clear

⁶ Source: Müller, Jürgen E. 2009b).

(*Sans Pareil* is a „rock-“ or “landscape-garden” close to the medieval castle Zwernitz, at a distance of about 30 kilometres from Bayreuth.)

⁷ The Calypso-Grotto today (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wonsees_Sanspareil_Ruinentheater.jp, last consultation 11th March 2019.

that we are *not* confronted with a simple transport of narrations between different media, but with *quite complex transformations of narrations, genres and dispositifs interacting with materialities and aesthetic options of the involved media.*

The historical category of genre should and could thus be used for the study of a whole variety of social functions of intermedia, ranging from support or structuring of specific processes of making meaning, bargaining of cultural values and norms, blueprints for generic productions and formats, negotiations of shared pleasures to economic evaluations. It is due to these generic processes that our prospect of anticipated expectation can meet with new and surprising horizons in a process of permanent hybridizations, leading to innovations of media and literary genres.

From all this follows – as a kind of second preliminary conclusion – that an intermedia historiography of genres has the potential to constitute a quite useful perspective for an integrative media research.

Interactivations, Augmented or Extended Realities and Caves

In the digital era of the 21st century, media have brought about a remarkable intensification of options of interactivity and interaction for producers and prosumers on different levels. I deliberately speak of *intensification* because, in my eyes, it would be rather naive to believe that interactivity is a phenomenon genuine of our times. A short glance at the history of serial novels in the 19th century, for example, proves that interactions between readers and writers had been a common phenomenon before digitization. However, in the age of media plenitude (Bolter, 2019), the *immediacy* and instantaneity of the feedback and the interactive agency of the user or producer have considerably increased. These new processes are to be regarded as genuine fields of intermedia studies.

Augmented reality is “technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user’s view of the real world, thus providing a composite view” (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). This “composite view” presupposes complex intermedia processes and interactions among our perception of the real physical world, of collective imaginary dimensions of our cultural background, and of virtual pictures and sounds. Following this line, “augmentation” could be reconceptualized as an idea, as a cultural and aesthetic practice rather than as a technological category. Even if, today, we might ask ourselves whether its impact on our media societies will be as prominent as was prophesized some years ago, there are many indications that this phenomenon will become an essential part of our future mixed, augmented, extended (as the most comprehensive term in this field) and hybrid realities.



ILLUSTRATION XV
*Fan projection of World of Warcraft, Caverns of Time*⁸

These practices of a constitution of virtual, augmented or extended realities are spreading quickly and getting more and more influence in our societies. An intermedia research of these practices will have to focus *historical or prehistorical dispositifs (our caves) and their digital correspondences including generic and aesthetic processes*. Central questions of this relevant future intermedia path in the jungles of extended realities would be, for example, relationships of contemporary augmented or extended productions with historical *dispositifs*, the historical development of polyaesthetics (Engberg, 2014), the intermedia constitution of immersive experiences (Wiehl, 2020), and historical and design redefinitions of space as a combination of sight, hearing, touch, and proprioception (Engberg & Bolter, 2014).

Gamifications

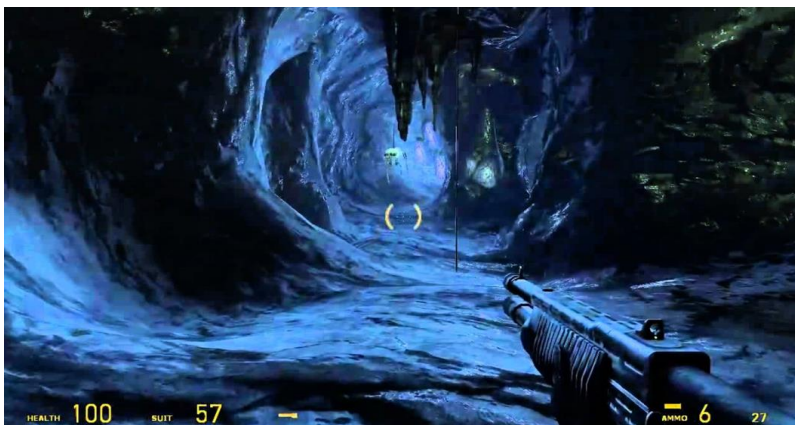


ILLUSTRATION XVI⁹

⁸ *Fan projection*, i.e. a projection by and for fans of *World of Warcraft, Caverns of Time* (source : https://www.google.com/search?q=world+of+warcraft+cavern&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=p9fn1Rm_DC9UkM%253A%252C8j6F0fCwouEkvM%252C_&usg=__OJfv2oNCjaHS4LunjK3bnWt8Zv8%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj9rMHgqxPbAhXF1qQKHW94BWsQ9QEIajAF#imggrc=j4mg0pasFj2uyM, last consultation 27th May, 2018).

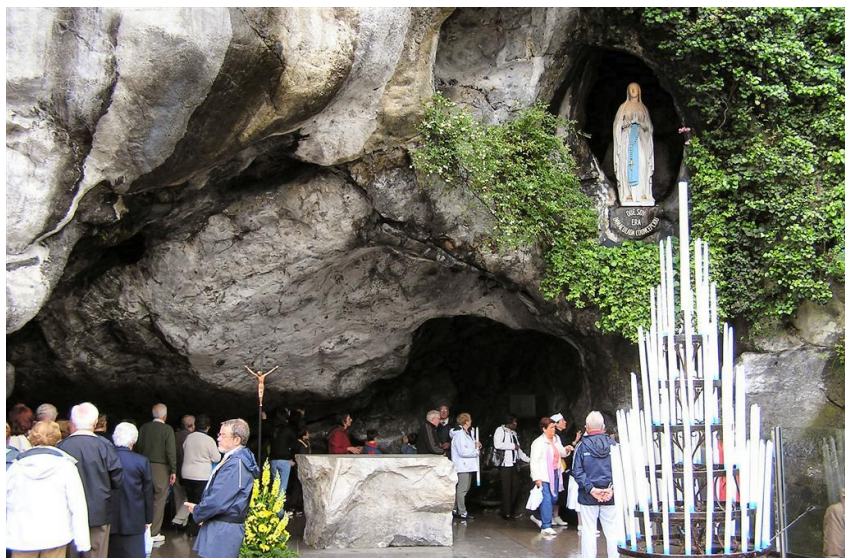
⁹ *Half-Life* (source : https://www.google.de/search?q=videogames+caves+sound+art&dcr=0&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj9ra_c8oDWAhWEXRQKHehdB-UQ7AkiOA&biw=1366&bih=604#imggrc=38HIGjJYYVoVM, last consultation 27th May, 2018).

This screenshot is taken from a first-person shooter internet-online-computer-game. In this subgenre of videogames, the player/user has to solve a series of problems, especially eliminating hostile fighters, aliens or superhuman monsters (Bouwknegt, 2008). The individual actions or moves in the game are thus predetermined by a set of variables and rules that enable the players to choose from a range of various options of action; this allows them to experience and finally conclude the game in their own manner. In this context, the game of *Half-Life 2* is praised by its producers for its outstanding qualities of “pounding action and continuous, immersive storytelling.”

This first-person shooter game proves to be another example of an intermedia *mise en abîme* or one of the very many intermedia plays with ‘cave-patterns’. The shooter is immersed into a cave where he/she (probably ‘he’) has to kill monsters. This immersion of our virtual shooter is doubled by the (desired) immersion of the player-shooter into the *dispositif* of the game, its narration and its archetypal space and reality. (By the way, this statement does not imply a simple parallelisation between the virtual and real shooters. Immersion always gives way to dynamic processes of volatile patterns of action and of identification! See Cooper’s clip *Immersion*, 2008 and his comments on this clip, 2010.) It is evident that prehistoric intermedia effects of caves do find digital remediations and revitalisations in contemporary first-person shooter games. A reconstruction of processes of signification and corresponding historical functions of such interplays is a promising field for future intermedia research.

Economizations and caves

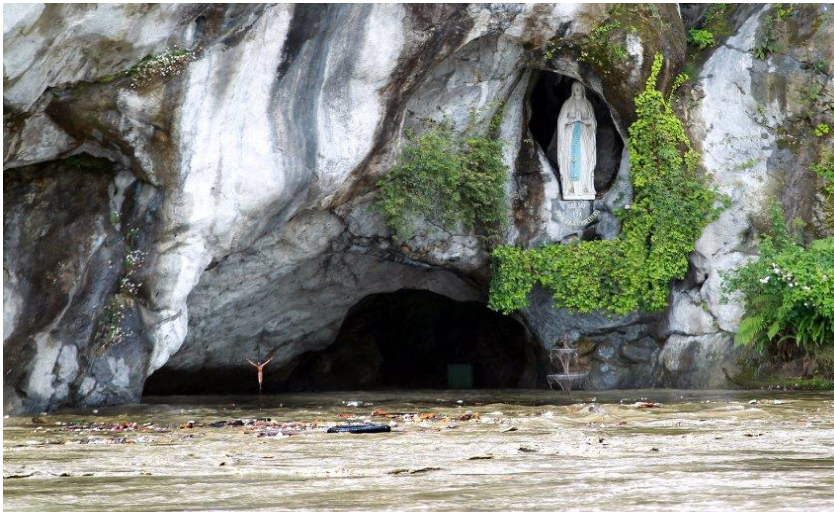
There is a further relevant aspect of intermedia processes that we have so far only mentioned in a marginal way: the *economies of intermediality*. As scholars of the Humanities, we tend to overlook the influence of economies on intermedia processes and intermedia histories. Against this background, a research axis of an intermedia economy would fill a big gap in an intermedia network history. The economic axis is to be found in manifold interdependencies with the afore mentioned four approaches: it focuses on the historical development of interferences, intersections, and networking between economic usages and typical patterns of action of users/prosumers/fans, without neglecting the social functions of these processes.



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ILLUSTRATIONS XVII/XVIII

The grotto of Lourdes¹⁰

Caves, grottos and economies

Intermedialities do also create *commodities*, which have at the same time traditional *monetary* value as well as *value of attention*. As we can see from one of the most famous caves and grottos of modern times, the *Grotto of Lourdes*, the recycling of mythical and religious dimensions and the remediation and recycling of prehistorical intermedia experiences of grottos go together with an industry of pilgrimage and an economy of attention where we can become a ‘virtual life-pilgrim’ via webcam at Lourdes and a more or less interactive virtual participant of the ongoing events.¹¹

Concluding, let me underline that such an intermedia economy is not restricted to popular or digital media. It also encompasses historical shifts between specific media and social fields (naturally also including ‘highbrow’ products and works of art) and thus ties intermedia research closer to all sorts of historical political and economic processes.

6 INTERMEDIALITY: THE MANY LIVES OF A SEARCH CONCEPT

While preparing the conclusion of this paper on the ‘life of intermediality’, William Uricchio’s book on *The Many Lives of Batman* came into my mind. Probably this has been caused by the many intermedia lives of Batman and his split-up existence in the darkness of a cave, which he leaves at night in order to bring ‘justice’ to the city of Gotham.

¹⁰ Lourdes and its remediations (sources :

https://www.google.de/search?q=grottes+piscines&dcr=0&tbm=isch&imgil=BAXc5MDmVzFONM%253A%253Bwhi cvbvs64sPwM%253Bhttps%25253A%25252F%25252Ffr.pinterest.com%25252Fexplore%25252Fpiscine-grotte%25252F&source=iu&pf=m&fir=BAXc5MDmVzFONM%253A%252Cwhicvbs64sPwM%252C_&usg=__ULZM0 T04XiIB4_zk4rjyOhYNZZ0%3D&biw=1366&bih=604&ved=0ahUKEwiv8Je10I7WAhUFJFAKHxNkALAQyjcITA&ei=oe auWe-bH4XIwALzyIGACw#imgdii=XfCt5KaFBpxRDM:&imgrc=cSQEa1KgoRSH-M and:

https://www.google.com/search?q=lourdes+grotte&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=sMYDmXqF4EookM%253A%252CK341pdrewO8F6M%252C_&usg=__s4NHj11w 71aJ0yR_EKki-0c62wc%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwii9KObyKPbAhXK-6QKHw6mB1oQ9QEIRzAC#imgrc=FSSOsnQ5asCEbM (inundation), last visits 13th March, 2019).

¹¹ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ADnSryJYp0> (last visit 13th March, 2019).

Without wanting to force too many parallels between Batman and intermediality, I must confess that this quite striking protagonist, created in the first half of 20th century, seems to be able to constitute an intertextual catalyst for my concluding remarks.



ILLUSTRATIONS XIX
Batman remediated by fan art¹²

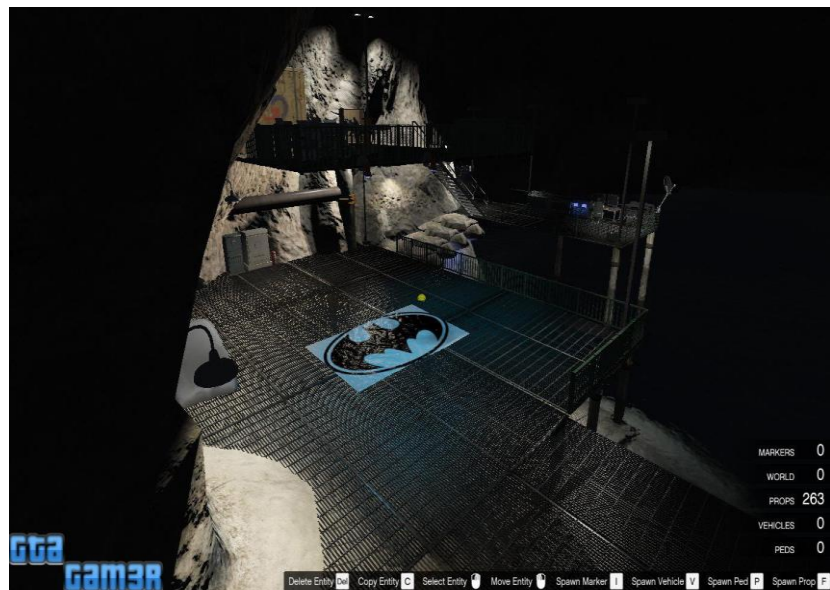


ILLUSTRATION XX
Batman as a video game¹³

¹² https://www.google.com/search?q=Batman+cave&client=firefox-b-ab&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw4bKW7p7dAhVRKVAKHYsdDBIQ7A16BAgFEA0&biw=1150&bih=631#imgrc=ywk_cjifzfgAHM: (last consultation 18th September, 2018)

¹³ <https://www.google.com/search?q=Batman+cave&client=firefox-b-ab&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw4bKW7p7dAhVRKVAKHYsdDBIQ7A16BAgFEA0&biw=1150&bih=631#imgrc=sHpjXEuKwjpbLM>: (last consultation 18th September, 2018)



ILLUSTRATION XXI

*Batman as a revenger and fighter against crime in classical comic*¹⁴

Aren't there some relationships and similarities between the many transmedia appearances of Batman in comics, films, clips, parodies and the fields of intermedia research?

However, at least as far as we know, the concept of intermediality has (except for one attempt to use it as a tool for sociological research and social engineering) not yet reached the status of a crime fighter in the dark world of Gotham City. On the other hand, we should not forget that Batman changes from a billionaire to a *bat* in a cave under his villa, which he leaves in order to 'work outside' for justice. He is an upper- and at the same time underworld being who undergoes permanent media-changes – also in relation to our five described intermedia research axes.

His cave refers to our reconstructed archaic intermedia processes as we've seen and heard before, and it refers also to the great fascination of modern (also digital) technologies. In this sense, Batman's cave can be seen as another attempt of the manifold media re-vitalizations of human experiences and feelings in and with caves. But Batman also – in a somewhat desperate and normative way – tries to bring some order into a dark social jungle full of crime. Well, hopefully, intermediality would and could never in such an obsessed and *normative* way attempt to bring order into our contemporary media jungle. However, in the age of media plenitude, intermediality can – in a phenomenological sense – describe and explain the many dimensions and social functions of media encounters. As mentioned before, Cisneros regards the upcoming of intermediality as a reaction to the decline of our contemporary academic world, which is split up in countless sub- and sub-sub-disciplines as well as discursive sub-worlds. Following this argument, scholars of intermediality could thus be regarded as Batwomen/Batmen of the media jungle of the 21st century doing their very best to fight this state of academic decline by avoiding premature reductions? But let us not get overambitious and too pretentious ..., now it's enough of Batman's and intermediality's many lives ...!

We hope that the winding paths of our reflections on the early history of the notion of intermediality, on prehistoric intermediality and archaeo-acoustics, on caves and the five intermedia research axes and – finally in a somewhat spontaneous way – on the many lives of Batman will have shown that the

¹⁴ https://www.google.com/search?q=Batman+cave&client=firefox-b-ab&tbnm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw4bKW7p7dAhVRKVAKHYsdDBIQ7A16BAgFEA0&biw=1150&bih=631#imgrc=_ (last consultation 18th September, 2018)

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intermedia search concept (Moser, 2007) is still alive. As a search concept it will generate further approaches to complex phenomena in form of theoretical (not taxonomic) models (see Lars Elleström's work), as well as historiological approaches. In the age of a rapid acceleration of remediations, an intermedia network history should be directed *as a rhizomatic history between the poles of technology, cultural series, media networks, historical mentalities, power structures and social practices* on different areas of historical and contemporary medialities.

Our paradigm of caves should finally have given some answers to the question, what intermediality *can do to us* (Grivel), or which "*effets de vie*" ("*effects of joy and of life*" Münch, 2004) can result from our meetings with the many in-betweens of media.

Ce sont des frissons, des grésillements qui courent le long du dos, des larmes, des visions, des rythmes intérieurs, des tensions et des relâchements, des angoisses et d'heureux apaisements, bref toute une série de sensations et de sentiments associés au sens.

(Münch, 2004, 39)

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