

to which “the manner of existing [...] is from start to finish a being-interpreted” (Watkin 2009: 77).

This intermingling of diverse social and cultural spaces (co-spatiality), the unpredictable quality of thresholds, their openness and ever-latent potential for reconfiguration are markers of interstitiality, which may be experienced in non-places such as petrol stations. In and through (popular) culture, however, the petrol station itself undergoes one further transformation, or *transfiguration*: the *site* becomes a *sign*, complex and multi-layered, as blatant as its ‘original’ was discrete; evasive, ambiguous, and yet eminently recognisable. This aspect will be developed in “Petrol Stations as In-Between Spaces II: Transfiguration.”

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## 4.8 PETROL STATIONS AS IN-BETWEEN SPACES II: TRANSFIGURATION

### *Agnès Prüm*

“Nothing special”<sup>105</sup> (male, 62, Luxembourger, Luxembourg). This expression, used by one of our interview partners about the things he would do or buy at a petrol station, aptly voices the quasi-consensus among our interviewees about the role and significance of petrol stations in everyday life. Petrol stations may sometimes, as Sonja Kmec has shown, become the scene of extraordinary events and experiences, and thus momentarily acquire the qualities of a ‘place’. These transformations are inadvertent and contingent, however, and petrol stations remain, in most situations, relegated to the realm of the “infra-ordinary” (Perec

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**105** | Personal translation of: “Näischt spezielles.”

1989).<sup>106</sup> In movies and popular culture in general, however, this tendency is reversed: the frequency with which they are associated with the out-of-the-ordinary seems out of all proportion, especially in relation to lived experience (Kmec/Prüm 2014). This contrast between 'real' petrol stations and their fictional counterparts is both puzzling and significant, because it reveals the transformation lived experience (Lefebvre 1986: 48-49) undergoes in the process of continual participatory encoding and decoding. This section proposes the concept of *transfiguration* as a tool to investigate the back and forth movement between lived experience and code. Firstly, transfiguration may be observed in the transformation of a material *site* into a mediated *sign* or 'code' everyone is able to access. In a second step, we will show how this process relies on a distancing from and dislocation of 'the real' in (pop)-cultural artefacts. Finally, we will explore the fundamentally participatory character of transfiguration and the performative appropriation of space it allows.

#### 4.8.1 From Site to Sign

Fears and anxieties associated with the uncertain status of the petrol station are not merely *transposed* into literary or filmic narratives about disturbing disappearances<sup>107</sup>, explosions (e.g. *Zoolander* 2001) or the undead.<sup>108</sup> While transposition presupposes a one-way process, in which an object or idea is encoded into popular culture once, and then decoded, in a presumably uniform manner, by various audiences, our qualitative interviews show that the process is more dynamic and relies on active participation.

The register in which our interview partners relate incidents or experiences they deem worth remembering or mentioning is a first indicator of this phenomenon. In most instances, the petrol station is both perceived and constructed as "infra-ordinary" and hardly elicits any reactions, but when it is associated with a particular memory or commentary, the register in which the incident is conveyed acquires a relational quality: it translates the interviewee's anger (buffet-man), appreciation (the tidiness of petrol stations), wonder (number of pumps at Schengen) and, most frequently, self-deprecation or humour (bombs on wheels) (see section 4.7).

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**106** | The present study has been developed together with Sonja Kmec. It builds on her discussion of petrol stations as interstitial spaces and focuses on the encoding of lived experience into film and other media. The same body of empirical data has been used in this analysis.

**107** | This preoccupation is not new: *Es geschah am helllichten Tag* (1958) was based on Friedrich Dürrenmatt's screenplay. Unsatisfied with the result, the author published *Das Versprechen. Requiem auf den Kriminalroman* the same year – released in 2001 as *The Pledge*. Tim Krabbé's psychological thriller *Het Gouden Ei* (1984) was brought to the screen in 1988 as *Spuurloos* and its remake *The Vanishing* in 1993.

**108** | E.g. *Zombie 3* (1988).

Our interview partners do not merely refer to cultural representations of petrol stations, they expect their conversation partner to grasp both the trope and the emotion it engendered for them in order to understand – and perhaps share – the ideas they (now) associate with petrol stations. In other words, the shift in register, which interpellates their audience and invites them to participate, becomes the instrument by which they activate the code and reconfigure ‘the petrol station’: they draw on pre-existing interpretive frameworks while charging the trope with dynamic meaning(s) of their own. Interestingly, the relational dimension observed in the shift from ‘place’ to ‘non-place’ can be observed in the reconfiguration of the petrol station trope.

Drawing on the ‘petrol-station-flowers’ trope and Hayley G. Hoover’s internet rant *Gas Stations* (2009) discussed by Sonja Kmec in this volume, this section explores the relational and participatory dimensions of the transfiguration of material site into mediated sign.

The meaning of the ‘petrol station’ trope is not fixed nor necessarily negatively charged, but in combination with certain situations and/or other tropes, such as ‘flowers from the petrol station’, it generates a stronger sense of unease, though it does remain ambivalent: two of our interview partners find flowers from the petrol station utterly “unromantic”, and they are often either associated with unacceptable disrespect, if the flowers are meant for one’s love interest<sup>109</sup>, or with humorous disregard, when the recipient is one’s mother-in-law. The quandary one of our respondents evidently faces, for instance, as he tries to reconcile the conflicting social imperatives associated with dating (personal register) and practicality (impersonal register), is telling:

“It is of course perhaps nicer if you [go] to a real florist’s, if, I say, if you have a date with a girl whom you really like; it is perhaps better to go to a florist’s and spend 10 € more, to get something personal. I can see that er – er, but if you pay a visit to your mother-in-law on a Sunday morning, and you are pressed for time, would there really be a problem? You may have to remove the price – oh – oh, my God”<sup>110</sup> (male, 31, Luxembourgish, Luxembourg).

Sonja Kmec links the ‘general sense of unease’ associated with flowers from the petrol station to the latter’s ‘impersonal’ and ‘non-space’ character (see section

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**109** | They top the list of worst gifts for Valentine’s Day (Winter 2013) and are perceived as tools for breaking up relationships (sheldonprice/nealdoran 2008).

**110** | Personal translation of: “Et ass äh, ähem, et ass natierlech villäicht méi schéin, wanns de an e richtge Blummebuttek, wann, ech soe mol, wanns de dann e Rendezvous mat engem Meedchen hues, dat de wierklech gär hues, ass et villäicht besser, an de Blummebuttek ze goen, eng Kéier 10 € méi auszeginn, eppes Perséinleches ze maachen. Dat gesinn ech schonn, mä äh, wanns de sonndes moies d’Schwéiermamm besiche gees an du bass am Stress, wat spréch’t dogéint ne. Muss villäicht de Präis erofhuelen, oh, oh, mäi Gott.”

4.7). One may further argue that this impersonal character has been encoded into different compound tropes, where, in combination with other tropes, the petrol station acts as a qualifier and determines hierarchical relationships between social actors and situations. It is clear that for our interview partner, the date, with its need to impress and succeed, trumps the mother-in-law, both in practice and 'in code'. The difficulty he is struggling with is thus two-fold: on the one hand, both recipients, 'the love interest' and 'the mother-in-law', may well be real persons, but they are also cultural codes, whose activation in this context reveals the various layers of meaning that intersect with the speaker's perception and construction of petrol stations. On the other hand, our interview partner's hesitation may also be caused by the fact that none of the tropes he draws on are stable, and that he is caught at the intersection between a variety of possible meanings, "none of them original", which "blend and clash" in a "tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1967 [1968]).

As this example shows, the real world petrol-stations our interview partner visits have become inextricably entwined with their cultural representations, as have the social dilemmas he faces. The conflation of the 'petrol-station flowers' and 'mother-in-law' tropes, for instance, pervades discursive practices and fiction/popular culture. In an episode from the ITV series *Midsomer Murders* (2008), the inversion of the love interest/mother-in-law hierarchy is signalled by two different bouquets the same woman receives. She is offered flowers from "all-night garage" by her husband, Chief Inspector Tom Barnaby, in order to make up for being late (a running gag throughout the series). His ill-fated flowers are instantly relegated to the rubbish bin, and are later markedly contrasted to the very impressive bouquet she receives from their daughter's soon to be official fiancé. Significantly, in this particular situation, wooing one's (future) mother-in-law is about as important as wooing one's fiancée: indeed, because the flowers+garage subtext combination disrupts accepted constructions of the 'mother-in-law' trope, the audience realizes, long before it has been announced, that a wedding, or a similar event, may be in the works. This example shows the hermeneutic versatility of these codes. Indeed, transfiguration is only possible because cultural codes remain fluid and open to reinterpretation, yet shared and easily accessible in socio-cultural contexts that may be as distinct and diverse as interview situations, personal conversations or media reception.

In popular culture, the site of the petrol station is not only transfigured into a sign conveying disregard for one's loved ones, but taps into deep-rooted anxieties. Hayley G. Hoover's self-generated video *Gas Stations* (2009) is *performed* in the rant mode, suggesting that she is letting off steam about something that 'really happened'. However, she both exploits and parodies the genre of the internet rant by blending modes of expression such as first person narratives and testimonies, puppet theatre performances (sock puppets), informational sexual harassment videos, self-parody and parodic re-enactments, in such a way that boundaries between these discursive practices are blurred. For instance, when the card reader

instructs her: “Please see attendant”, she fumes: “*No! No, I cannot see* an attendant right now: it is early in the morning, the flu is going around school and if I get another whiff of that corn-dog, I am going to *puke*.<sup>111</sup> Despite these grievances, Hayley eventually surrenders: “I see the attendant [demonstrative pause] because I am a good citizen.” Though her annoyance at having to interact with a gas station attendant may well be ‘real’ and may also provoke ‘real’ responses, it is important to note that the episode as recounted is not: Hayley admits at the end of her rant that a significant part of the incident at the gas station is merely “imagined”.

The ‘gas station’ thus becomes the site where the different discursive practices and their corresponding social spaces blend, clash and generate new meaning(s): adulthood and good citizenship, for instance, are equated with, and reconfigured as, responsible consumer behaviour. Drawing on associations with its ‘non-place’ character – the dehumanized cyborg space and other signifying chains such as the “creepy uncles” (see section 4.7), the stereotypical “attendant”, who expects Hayley to “pay with plastic” as a typical representative of her generation etc. – Hayley/Hoover simultaneously decodes and encodes the petrol station. The fluidity of the reconfiguring encoding/decoding process is marked by the absence or the shifting of boundaries between the fictional and the so-called ‘real’, and the ‘real’ is perceived and constructed through the medium of fiction.

Hoover’s rant presents attributes that Limor Shifman considers “fundamental to popular culture”:

“The first is the postmodern representation system of simulacra and pastiche (Jameson, 1991) [...]. The second is the constant reworking of texts by internet users, reflecting a so-called ‘participatory culture’. Conceptualized as a set of intertwined cultural practices, participatory culture is manifested in new forms of expression, problem solving, circulation and affiliation (Jenkins et al. 2007). Fundamental to this complex web is the practice of reconfiguring content and publicly displaying it in parodies, mashups, remixes and other derivative formats” (Shifman 2011: 188).

In her examination of participatory practices, Shifman distinguishes between “viral videos”, clips “that spread[s] to the masses via digital word-of-mouth mechanisms *without significant change*” (ibid.: 190) and “memetic videos [...] that generate extensive user engagement by way of creative derivatives” (ibid.: 188). Though according to the criteria defined in this study, *Gas Stations* may not be classified fully memetic (we did not find any derivatives of this video), its parody of the rant genre and creative appropriations evident in various enactments (the gas station attendant, sock puppets etc.) clearly aligns it with participatory culture of the ‘new media’, Web 2.0 and internet memes.

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**111** | The italics in this excerpt mark the passages where the speaker’s intonation denotes outrage.

Hoover's rant transfigures the 'gas station', transforming an infra-ordinary situation into a critical and participatory proclamation.<sup>112</sup> Significantly, though its meaning has been reconfigured, the actual 'gas station' itself remains constant and unchanged.

#### 4.8.2 Dislocating the Real

The distancing that occurs between the initial encounter with a random customer at the petrol station, his construction as a potential threat, and the 'creepy uncle' simulacrum (Baudrillard 1981) he transforms into in *Gas Stations* is critical to the process of transfiguration. According to Arthur C. Danto, "That it is not really happening" remains even now an important contribution to our enjoyment of art which manages to distance the real and to disarm it" (Danto 1974: 146). On the one hand, this suggests that, beyond the "enjoyment" it procures, one of the primary aims of Hayley's rant might be to defuse the "real" anxieties she associates with petrol stations. On the other hand, the threat that is both there and not there, and its displacement from Hoover's 'reality' to Hayley's 'rant' may serve to further illuminate the process of transfiguration. Danto's analysis of transfiguration hinges on the semantic ambiguity of the concept of 'appearance', which can signify both 'real physical presence' (1) and its contrary, the 'appearance of physical presence' (2): depending on the interpretive frameworks in place, an object such as Cimabue's crucifix<sup>113</sup> may be read as "about the crucifixion rather than the crucifixion itself, and represented rather than present again" (ibid.: 146).

"Doubtless a different attitude towards the artist will be taken depending upon whether we attribute to him the power to make a charged reality present again, rather than the power to represent reality. In any case, the shift from the first to the second sense of appearance would exemplify just the transfiguration of life into art which Nietzsche describes in his genealogy [sic] of attic tragedy. There, the boundaries of the sacred precinct are transformed into the walls of a theater, as, in the case of Cimabue, the altar where the sacred event eternally occurs is changed into an elaborate frame housing a work of art, as the church itself undergoes alteration into a kind of inadvertent museum. And all of this without the object itself being changed at all" (ibid.: 146).

**112** | On 15.12.2013, *Gas Stations* was viewed 36,451 times since its upload on 06.02.2009, obtained 952 likes, 30 dislikes and generated 265 comments.

**113** | Danto refers to a painted crucifix (c. 1280) that is generally attributed to the thirteenth century artist Cimabue (Cenni di Pepi). Though badly damaged by the flood of 1966, it is located at the Santa Croce Church and Museum in Florence (West 1996 and Santa Croce Church and Museum, Florence, [http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/museum\\_of\\_opera\\_s\\_croce.html](http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/museum_of_opera_s_croce.html)).

Danto's conception of the "transfiguration of life into art", which is triggered by the "shift from the first to the second sense of appearance", or from "present again" to "represented" (ibid.: 146), relies on two main features: first, the (transfigured) object, in this case the cross of Cimabue, remains unchanged and, secondly, transfiguration has a profoundly transformative effect, as both the architectural and the ideological constructs erected around it have evolved and continue to evolve in time. To put it plainly, what has changed is not the object itself, but the way we look at it and the meanings we ascribe to it. The cross acts as an interstice, a bridge between the different meanings and worldviews it elicits.

In the context of this study, then, the process of transfiguration implies that our object, petrol stations as actual places or types of places, do not undergo any material alterations, but that the meanings, emotions and cultural significance ascribed to them adjust to match the frames of mind in which they are both experienced and represented. This may shed further light on why the same person can experience petrol stations as both a "time efficient 'non-place' and an 'enjoyable place'" (see section 4.7). It may also provide us with a more dynamic model to describe the oscillation between site and sign petrol stations undergo through discursive practices and cultural encoding. Indeed, petrol stations provide a prime example of the 'transfiguration of life into art', as the 'freak gasoline fight accident' in Ben Stiller's 2001 movie *Zoolander* will demonstrate.

On one level, within the universe of the movie, we witness a creative appropriation of a petrol station by Derek Zoolander, a parody of a male supermodel, and his friends. Before their arrival, the petrol station is very much a 'non-place', dehumanized and anonymous, but as they drive up to the pump, dressed in individualized colours reminiscent of *Power Rangers* combat suits (Mighty Morphin Power Rangers 1993-1995) and perform a pastiche blending dance, martial arts routines and bikini carwash moves that quickly mutates into a water fight, the fictional petrol station is transformed into a 'place'. Like the hen night observed by our interview partner (see section 4.7), this scene is witnessed by two male onlookers. Unlike our interviewee, however, they are not amused by what they see, and their disapproving demeanours signal that the gender-bending appropriation of the sexually charged bikini carwash practice by four young men severely disrupts their heteronormative expectations. Of course there is no direct causal link between the interview situation in our case study and the scene in the movie, which actually predates our research. Their juxtaposition, however, does reveal a dialogic relationship (Bakhtin 1981a) between everyday practices and cultural artefacts. Significantly, as this example shows, movies do not merely transfer existing social or cultural practices into fiction: they actively transform or exaggerate them, they offer commentary or critiques, and they invite laughter or outrage, and so forth.

As the viewer navigates in and out of fictional, 'real' and simulated space, the water fight degenerates into a gasoline fight, and ... one of the characters lights a cigarette. The viewer is able to predict the subsequent explosion from a form of

culturally generated ‘foresight’ that blends experience of practice (the combination of petrol and flames may lead to fire and explosions) and of sign/simulation (they will hopefully not have experienced the explosion of a ‘real’ petrol station). More significantly, however, the simulated filmic explosion blows up more than the petrol station: the various chains of signification that are active in this extract are revealed to be hollow and decentred, not rooted in the ‘real’.

As this brief account suggests (see Kmec/Prüm 2014 for an in-depth analysis), the ‘freak gasoline fight accident’ both highlights and relies on the fact that petrol stations can be experienced as both sites and signs, and the film itself acts as a form of gateway, or interstice, between the various interpretive layers individual viewers may or may not activate. To expand on Danto’s metaphor, ‘transfiguration of life into art’, or (popular) culture, may be defined as the shift from presence to simulation, or from site to sign. Combined with the idea of interstitial spaces as sites of potential participatory practices and culture, this shift becomes an oscillation, a back and forth movement between material petrol stations and their creative appropriations. In other words, transfiguration denotes the process by which lived experience, including its spaces and objects, is continuously and simultaneously encoded, decoded, and reconfigured at the threshold of interaction between various actors of (participatory) culture. Indeed, like Hayley’s rant, *Zoolander* exhibits memetic qualities: combining parody and mimesis, it has sparked numerous re-enactments<sup>114</sup>, disseminated as user-generated videos, and the jeep ride to the petrol station, set to Wham!’s *Wake Me Up Before You Go Go* (1984), has spawned its own meme, the ‘Zoolander Dance’ or ‘Jeep Party’, and a plethora of compilations, remixes and parodies, casting British football stars, the Obamas, Hillary Clinton or Michael Jackson in the roles of Zoolander and his friends (*Zoolander Dance/Jeep Party* 2005).

#### 4.8.3 Performing (in) Space

As interstitial spaces, and because of their ‘standard’ ‘non-place’ status, petrol stations thus provide a perfect location to observe the ways in which participatory practices emerge from the collision between various social spaces. The widespread internet practice of pastiche, imitation and parody raises one last additional question, however. None of the processes described above happen *outside* human consciousness and/or interaction, and the human body itself can become the interstice, the instance of transfiguration. The unpublished iPhone video caught on camera at a large petrol station at the border between Luxembourg and Germany (Aire de Wasserbillig 2012), will serve to illustrate this claim.

We argued above that the young man’s impromptu traffic cone performance expresses a humorous critique of the effects of the Luxembourgish fiscal regime

**114** | For example, Matt Hemphill-Zoolander Gasoline Fight Parody, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKoj6jSu4AY>.

on the (im)permeability of the country's borders (see section 4.7). One may also argue, however, that in this clip, or through this clip, different spaces, such as national, fiscal and legal spaces, social networks and internet culture etc. are brought into contact with one another, and that the bridge between these different types of spaces are the young man, his cone and the setting he has chosen for his performance. He is the medium between interpretive frameworks and platforms, and his performance reconfigures the Aire de Wasserbillig. Like the cross of Cimabue, both the petrol station and the young man himself remain materially unchanged by this performance, though they do, for a moment, channel what could be described as multiple (other) voices.

This episode may be expounded by reference to the discipline that coined the concept of transfiguration: theology. Dorothy Lee's analysis of the process of Jesus' transfiguration or metamorphosis into incandescent light (Lee 2004: 2), one of the central miracles celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Church, may help us decode the mundane scene observed at the Aire de Wasserbillig. In seemingly oblique ways, this episode is reminiscent of the Transfiguration scene in the Bible, which Lee describes as follows:

"The transfiguration tells the story of Jesus' ascent of the mountain somewhere at the mid-point of his ministry, in the company of his disciples. There his physical appearance is changed, metamorphosing into incandescent light, a light that blazes from his face and clothing. Two of the greatest (long-dead) prophets of Israel's past appear beside him, conversing with him. The disciples, meanwhile, are overawed at the spectacle and respond with incomprehension and bewilderment, Peter proposing to erect three tents to house Jesus and his celestial guests. At this point a cloud intervenes, overshadowing the heavenly figures, and a voice speaks from the cloud, declaring Jesus to be the beloved Son. Then the miraculous signs recede and Jesus is left alone to descend the mountain with his bemused disciples" (Lee 2004: 2).

Lee's account of the biblical transfiguration identifies a set of characteristics, which once divested of their religious import and specific narrative aspects, can be abstracted and applied to our analysis of petrol stations as combinations of site and sign: first, a particular setting is chosen (mountain/petrol station); secondly, the medium's body undergoes a visible, though temporary, transformation (incandescent light/cone); thirdly, routines of third party onlookers are disrupted (the disciples/the customers); fourthly, a dialogue is established between different actors that are co-present only because the medium has invoked them (the long-dead prophets and the clouds, the different social, fiscal, social and cultural spaces); and finally, after the event, neither place nor medium are changed: the "miraculous signs recede", Jesus leaves the mountain, and the young man drops his cone, leaves the petrol station and the bemused onlookers revert back to their routines.

If Jesus in the transfiguration scene is “the meeting-place between human beings and God, between the temporal and the eternal, between past, present and future, between everyday human life [...] and the mystery of God” (ibid.: 2), the young man and his performance become, for the onlookers, and for a fleeting moment, the visual carrier of critique and the trigger of oscillation between ‘space’ and ‘non-space’. As the young man’s declaration disrupts the customers’ routines, the petrol station as a site is transfigured into sign, its signification temporarily changed and expanded way beyond the physical space that it occupies materially, even beyond the territorial, political and fiscal co-spatiality his intervention critiques. Indeed, his performance also draws on the ‘VLC Player in Real Life’ series of image macros, in which orange and white traffic cones are reconfigured into megaphones or converted into embodiments of the VLC Player icon.<sup>115</sup> Significantly, both performer and observer may or may not be aware of the fact that the computer software VLC Media Player uses an orange and white traffic cone as an icon, and that the association between traffic cones and the VLC Media Player is a common internet joke.

By appropriating the Aire de Wasserbillig in this particular way, the nameless young man simultaneously perpetuates and activates internet culture – thus transforming, without changing his being, for a brief moment, into the incarnation of a new media, a new culture, and perhaps ‘his generation’. As he becomes the gateway between the various spaces and interpretive frameworks his performance activates, the latter is also revealed as fundamentally participatory:

“However, in contrast to textual memes, memetic videos and their derivatives focus much more on the performative self. Uploaders become both the medium of the meme and its message: their faces and bodies are integral parts of these clips” (Shifman 2011: 200).

#### 4.8.4 Conclusion

This study has examined the intertwining of practical, textual and ideological dimensions and developed the concept of ‘transfiguration’ as fundamentally participatory and relational, and going beyond a unilateral ‘transposition’ of lived reality into fiction or vice-versa. Indeed, as we have shown, social spaces and interpretative frameworks are co-present; far from invalidating each other, they actually reinforce each other. Fuelled by anxieties of sexual harassment and human interaction, Hayley G. Hoover’s user-generated video exorcises her fears through a creative reconfiguration of the petrol station. The second example, a highly intertextual Hollywood production, *Zoolander*, features a comic/tragic explosion of a petrol station that has spawned a series of internet memes and other

**115** | The “Protestor assists in the installation of VLC Media Player” image macro, for instance, was disseminated on different social networks platforms such as <http://imgur.com/gallery/oWzuoOG> and <http://9gag.com/gag/aozgAYX>.

derivative practices. Finally, a spontaneous creative appropriation of a Luxembourg petrol station, lampooning fiscal regimes, fortuitously caught on film, reveals the complexity of the relationship between co-spatiality and transfiguration.

In the end, petrol stations continue to exist as components of daily routines relegated to the margins of everyday life. Unlike many of their filmic counterparts, they remain mostly ordinary, and our interview partners were generally surprised to be asked questions about a place with which they associate “nothing special”. As objects of analysis, however, they have provided an invaluable medium that has allowed us to shed light on the hidden intricacies of the ‘common place’ and its transfiguration into (popular) culture.

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## 4.9 CONCLUSIONS

The present chapter attempts to shed light on the connection between space and identity with regard to media. Here, media are defined spatially, as zones of contact, i.e. as areas in which boundaries and differentiations are negotiated. The notion of space in this chapter is specified accordingly. On the assumption that spatial structures are both precondition and result of social practices, the focus is directed to *interstices*, understood as areas that cannot readily be attributed to delineated and clearly defined spaces.

The common feature of the case studies in this chapter is that they establish connections between spatial structures on different levels. This procedure stems from considering media of representation with their possibility of a (projective) re-description of reality. A particularly important point here is in how far boundaries on different levels tend to subvert or confirm each other (or both at the same time!).

Thus the case study on museum thresholds relates two structural levels to each other: the cultural space constituted by the exhibition and the space of everyday life. Thresholds – for instance the entrance area of a museum or even the showcase in a publicly accessible hall – here present themselves as an area of transition and mediation between these two spaces. Their effect can differ strongly depending on the type of threshold. The boundary between cultural space and everyday space can be rendered almost wholly invisible, or, conversely, fleshed out in detail as a *rite de passage* turned into architecture. The case study on the self-representation of Luxembourg teenagers on *facebook* makes a connection between the levels of presentation in the social network, on the one hand, and the real-world self-positioning, on the other. Here one can see that the boundary between private and public space that the teenagers presume as given and attempt to maintain in their social network has more or less already been subverted by the conditions of the medium. At the same time it becomes evident that the teenagers' 'real' self-image does not remain unaffected by the network's structural presettings, e.g. the categorization of other users as 'family' – for instance when good friends are first rubricated as family and then also regarded as such. The case study on language choice in Luxembourg advertisements, by contrast, points to a relatively clear confirmation of boundaries through mediated representation. It shows that the on the whole sporadic mixture of languages in newspaper and poster advertisements in Luxembourg – i.e. the temporary suspension of boundaries between languages 'on paper' – has in the adverts basically the function of reinforcing the existence of national and linguistic borders on the sociocultural (and political) level. In