Intermediality and Transmediality: Unbraiding Converged Theories

(Irina Rajewsky)
Intermediality in a broad sense

- a flexible generic term "that can be applied, in a broad sense, to any phenomenon involving more than one medium"
  (Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction*, 1999, 40f.)
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- a flexible generic term "that can be applied, in a broad sense, to any phenomenon involving more than one medium"
  (Wolf 1999, 40f.)
- 'crossing of media borders'
1. What do I mean by intermediality 'in a broad sense'?
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2. What are concepts of intermediality in a more narrow sense?
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2. What are concepts of intermediality in a more narrow sense?
3. How can we deal with the problematic issue of 'media borders'?
Concepts of Intermediality

1. 'Intermediality' in a broad sense
Conceptions of Intermediality

1. 'Intermediality' in a broad sense

- Two 'poles' of the debate:
  1. 'Intermediality' as a critical categorie for the concrete analysis of medial configurations (individual texts, films, performances, computer games, comics, etc.);
  2. Intermediality as a fundamental condition of our culture and media-recognition, aiming at the general interrelatedness of media and individual medial practises

- Pole 2 = 'Intermediality' in 'the broadest sense'
Conceptions of Intermediality

1. 'Intermediality' in a broad sense

2. Concepts of intermediality in a more narrow sense
2. Intermediality* in the narrower sense of:

- **medial transposition/medial transformation (Medienwechsel)**
  [e.g., film adaptations, 'novelizations']

- **multimediality/plurimediality/media combination (Medien-kombination)** – "co-presence" of two or more media in a given medial configuration
  [e.g., theatre, opera, film, illuminated manuscripts, comics, graphic novels, Sound Art, performance art, etc. / in other terminology: multimedia, mixed-media, and intermedia]

- **intermedial references (intermediale Bezüge)**
  [e.g., so-called filmic writing (= references in a literary text to a specific film, to a film genre, or to film qua medium, for instance through the evocation or simulation of certain film techniques), musicalization of literature, *ekphrasis*, *transposition d’art*, references in film to painting, in painting to photography, etc.]

* 'Intermediality', here, is understood as a **critical category for the concrete analysis of medial configurations** (e.g., individual texts, films, paintings, etc.).
Conceptions of Intermediality

1. Intermediality 'in a broad sense'

2. Concepts of intermediality in a more narrow sense

3. How can we deal with the problematic issue of 'media borders'?
Caffe Express
Richard Estes, 1975
Bus Reflections
Richard Estes, 1972
Dogville
Lars von Trier, Denmark 2003
"[...] I here propose to use a broad concept of medium: not in the restricted sense of a technical or institutional channel of communication but as a conventionally distinct means of communication or expression characterized not only by particular channels (or one channel) for the sending and receiving of messages but also by the use of one or more semiotic systems."

(Werner Wolf, "Musicalized Fiction and Intermediality", 1999)
'Transmediality' as opposed to certain understandings of intermediality in a narrow sense (cf., e.g., Chiel Kattenbelt):

"In a variety of art and media discourses, a wide range of concepts have been developed in order to characterize specific relationships between the arts and media. [...] To phrase it very briefly, «multimediality» refers to the occurrence where there are many media in one and the same object; «transmediality» refers to the transfer from one medium to another medium (media change); and «intermediality» refers to the co-relation of media in the sense of mutual influences between media. These concepts are not only used in different discourses, but often also in one and the same discourse where they can operate on different levels."

"The concept of transmediality is mainly used in art and communication theoretical discourse for referring to the change (transposition, translation etc.) from one medium to another"

Conceptions of Transmediality II

'Transmediality' as understood in the field of 'transmedial narratology'

- Intermediality vs. Transmediality

- **Intermediality** – pointing to relations *between* media (i.e., medial interactions, interplays, or interferences in the sense of intermedial transpositions, multimediality, intermedial references / phenomena "involving more than one medium")

- **Transmediality** – pointing to phenomena that appear, or may appear, *across* media. Transmedially relevant phenomena manifest themselves, or are observable, in a similar way in a variety of different media (e.g., narration/narrativity, phenomena such as *mise en abyme* or metalepsis, the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic or discourse across media, etc.)
Mise en abyme – a transmedial phenomenon

Metalepsis – a transmedial phenomenon

Pere Borrell del Caso, *Escapando la Critica* (1874), Banco de Espana, Madrid
The concept of **transmediality** may be understood as differing from **intermediality** in terms of its underlying **perspectives** on medial practices. In actual analysis it may well be useful and productive to regard given issues from an *intermedial* as well as from a *transmedial* perspective (cf., e.g., Adaptation Studies).
"Victor de Bono, an unjustly neglected pioneer of the cognitive turn, pointed out that the choice of an 'entry point' into a space or system can make all the difference, both in the perception of a thing or the solution of a problem"
