

## Introduction

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Phenomena that take place at media borders – the crossing and falling below borders, the drawing and shifting of borders – are fundamental to communicative practice. Investigating them allows us to explore both the limiting characteristics of specific media and media constellations and their borders themselves. Located in artistic as well as everyday, historical as well as contemporary forms of communication, media borders as a heterogeneous research subject cause the interest and participation of researchers of a wide range of disciplines.

In the past decades, the emergence of ›new media‹ and the increased attention to the complexity of communicative actions have raised urgent questions and brought about a rapidly growing and differentiated research field. The approaches and concepts developed by researchers toward understanding the complex, media-related structures of relations are ubiquitous and have led to a multitude of outstanding research projects and a plurality of technical terminologies. However, as interdisciplinary as the objects and as specific as the approaches and affiliations of the researchers may be, the discourse on media borders largely lacks terminological and methodological integration. Some approaches have become incomprehensible from the perspective of others.

This anthology takes a first step towards an urgently needed, genuinely interdisciplinary discourse. The explicit aim is not to standardize the discourse, but rather to re-focus the differentiated theoretical approaches and studies.

In selecting the contributions, I attempted to capture, therefore, a broad spectrum of different perspectives while asking that all contributors communicate their respective theoretical and methodological premises as openly as possible.

Before introducing the individual contributions, I first address the potential uses of the collection.

## 1 How to Use the Bilingual Volume

This collection was conceived as fundamentally bilingual in order to strengthen the exchange between the English-speaking and German-speaking scientific communities, especially in the theoretical-methodological field: A bilingual title and abstract precede each article, so that readers can decide whether the effort of reading in a foreign language seems worthwhile. The introductory chapters are always bilingual, allowing all readers to gain an overview of the topics and objectives of the collection. Across borders in sciences, there seems to be a deficit in the reception of non-native language concepts and theory, which this book attempts to counteract. The reasons for this reception deficit may lie, on the one hand, in the requirement of linguistic precision in theoretical texts, and, on the other hand, in the seemingly unmanageable variety of available concepts — a variety that may be partly narrowed by the more convenient access to concepts in one's native language.

By re-locating different perspectives together in one volume, the book aims to offer an abstract, meta-level overview of core questions on phenomena of media borders and their research. This overview initiates a transdisciplinary discourse for the purpose of mutual enrichment and co-operation. All authors have paid particular attention to presenting their own theoretical and methodological premises as transparently as possible. This is intended to make access to approaches from outside their field easier for researchers and to allow them to assess the suitability of new terms and methods for their own research questions. My following contribution »On the Volume's topic — Media Border Phenomena and Their Investigation« looks for initial similarities and differences between the thoroughly heterogeneous studies in order to provide an impetus for future transdisciplinary discussion. The chapter should also make it easier for readers to compare and link the perspectives collected in this volume.

The potential of the collection lies in its use as a methodological handbook for research questions in the field of borderline media phenomena, even if completeness cannot be assumed or expected. Two obvious gaps with respect to intermediality and multimodality are briefly addressed in the chapter »Media Border Phenomena and Their Investigation«,<sup>1</sup> but there are so many others that they would fill several more volumes.

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1 Relevant introductory and overview literature on these well-known approaches can be found regarding *multimodality*, for example, in Jewitt 2017; Klug und Stöckl 2016;

## 2 Structure of the Volume

There is a programmatic division in the structure of this volume. The first part contains theoretical and methodological impulses for addressing media border phenomena, and the second part contains individual studies on specific phenomena. The different studies and contributions offer consistent findings and content on specific questions, subject areas and theoretical or methodological approaches.

### 2.1 Part 1: Theories and Methods

*Thomas Metten's* contribution entitled »Das Medium als Grenze« (»Liminal Media Theory«) presents a proposal for a liminal media theory and argues for an understanding of media as a boundary surface for the organization of processes in the constitution of meaning. He sharpens his proposal by a discussion of historical and current understandings of media, which explicitly integrates artistic and everyday media design practices. The article also shows how versatile the concept of the medium can be and which implications are associated with respective concepts.

Whereas *Thomas Metten's* contribution develops an understanding of media as a boundary surface, *Patrick Rupert-Kruse* shifts the focus from understanding media as such to questioning the boundary between media offerings and their users, or, more precisely: the »Formationen der (Ent-)Grenzung innerhalb immersiver Interfacekonstellationen« (»Formations of (Dis)Boundary in Immersive Interface Constellations«). Using haptic-tactile interfaces, he examines the relationship between boundaries and granularity with regard to ontological boundaries, physical boundaries and material and immaterial surfaces. The interplay of demarcations and transgressions or permeabilities that he works out in detail appears to be transferable to other — non-immersive, non-digital, and non-haptic-tactile — interface constellations.

The third contribution to this volume is a compilation of two translations of texts by the Swedish media scholar *Lars Elleström* (1960–2021), who passed away unexpectedly during the course of the collaboration on this collection. However, the publication of his texts *post mortem* will hopefully

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Bateman et al. 2017; and regarding *intermediality* Rajewsky 2002; Rippl 2015 and others.

contribute to the survival of his academic work in German-speaking countries. Over the past decades, Lars Elleström has continuously worked on a media and communication model, with which a general and detailed analysis of intermedial relations should be made possible.<sup>2</sup> The texts selected here are intended as a supplement to an article by Elleström (2017) that is, the only one available in German to date in which his communication model is explained. The first part of the translation, which is devoted in a more general form to the »Identifying, Construing, and Bridging over Media Borders«, is accompanied by an excerpt from the most recent overall presentation of his theory, in which specific intermedial types of relation are discussed. The advantages of Elleström's model lie in its applicability to a wide range of media phenomena and formats as well as in its clarity and dynamism, so that, as Elleström himself puts it, »the model may also offer a starting point for methodical analyses in the service of various research questions attaching to mediality at large and more specifically media interrelations analyses in the service of the media«.<sup>3</sup>

While Lars Elleström's model already offers relatively concrete approaches to a methodological application, the two following contributions present explicitly methodological treatments of media border phenomena. In his article »Die visuelle Stilanalyse« (»On the Methodology of an Analysis of Visual Style«), *Stefan Meier* introduces the method he developed by using it in a case study. He shows how the visual and multimodal communication of the identity of the DC superhero Green Arrow can be examined in comics and film posters. Meier's method is based on a social-semiotic model of style and aims to »hermeneutically reconstruct the visual identity of (convergence-cultural) media figures« in order to reveal implicit visual strategies. In addition to the fictional superhero figures discussed in the article, his method can also be used, for example, to examine real media figures such as influencers in more detail; the analysis of a music band's self-portrayal, as Kathrin Engelskircher undertakes in the second part of the volume, would also be quite conceivable using this method.

The contribution by *Marco Agnetta* also presents a clear research method by focusing on phenomena of media combination rather than media convergence from a semiotic perspective. The author aims at an analytical model that makes it possible to systematically describe complex, even aes-

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2 The model was first published in Elleström 2010. In Elleström 2021 there is an expanded presentation of his theory.

3 Elleström 2021, S. 84.

thetic polysemiotic communications and to examine them with regard to synsemiotic relationships. He illustrates the approach using the example of opera, but at the same time it becomes clear that it could be transferred to other complex multimedia objects in which different media or sign systems are connected and interact. A clear advantage is the explicit inclusion of aesthetic — rather than efficiency-oriented instrumental — communication at the level of abstraction of his sign-theoretical model.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Part 2: Case Studies

The second part of the volume contains individual studies on specific media border phenomena. *Sebastian Richter*'s contribution builds a bridge from the methodological impulses of the previous part. He sheds light on the crossing of media boundaries in the methodological transcription of performative objects of investigation. In doing so, he examines the problems and cognitive potentials that can go hand in hand with the academic practice of transcribing audiovisual and performative hypermedia or media artifacts. In an analysis of a mixed-media installation and the introductory sequence of a video game, he discusses the limits and possibilities of perception scores as a written instrument for analyzing audiovisual works with performative elements.

*Lisa Bauer* devotes her analysis to an apparently atypical subject: the mathematical proof of the four-color theorem. From a linguistically informed, multimodal perspective, she examines the joint use of text and image as well as their boundary areas. In doing so, she demonstrates that even objects that are intuitively perceived to be outside the scope of a particular discipline can be profitably explored for both fields using linguistic or humanities methods. By looking at semiotic phenomena in a mathematical proof — which are rather distant from communication in everyday or cultural contexts — her study sharpens insights into the potential joint use and differentiation of image and text signs. Moreover, such an investigation also provides new impulses for the conscious and precise application of communicative means in mathematical argumentation.

»Vom spannungsreichen Dialog zwischen Erzählprosa und bildender Kunst« (»On the Tension-Filled Dialogue between Prose and the Fine

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4 An English-language presentation of his approach can be found in: Gernalzick et al. 2024, S. 341–360.

Arts») is the subject of *Laura Rosengarten's* article. In her intermedial analysis, she places the literary model of Gustave Flaubert's *Légende de Saint Julien L'Hospitalier* (1875) on an equal footing with Amadeo Souza-Cardoso's adaptation in the form of an artistic book and so explores the ruptures and ambivalences between the book project and the literary reference point. By asking how Souza-Cardoso engages the literary model, the author is able to contribute new insights into the socio-historical and artistic classification of the work through the intertwined examination of both works. In doing so, she offers a counterpoint to a predominantly affirmative research perspective that aims to integrate the artist — who was largely forgotten after the First World War — into the artistic canon of *modernismo português*. The decidedly work-centered approach is the key moment of such a differentiated classification.

In her study, *Kathrin Engelskircher* analyzes the phenomenon of »Trans-textualität in der Popkultur« (»Transtextuality in Pop Culture«) using the example of the music band The Recalls. She examines how the group creates references to The Beatles through their media-convergent self-representation and considers these references as transsemiotic acts of translation that update, recontextualize, and recode existing material from different text and media forms. Engelskircher emphasizes that classical translational terms and categories such as »original«, »equivalence«, and »fidelity« are not sufficient to fully grasp the complexity of pop-cultural translation phenomena. She follows Lucile Desblache's view that music draws its creative dynamics from the tensions between imitation and innovative interpretation and is dependent on variations and hybridity. Inter- and transtextuality are seen as strategies according to a performative definition of translation as dialogical understanding. These acts of translation contribute to an understanding of the complex dynamics of pop culture and its cross-media processes.

Using the theories of remediation<sup>5</sup> and relocation,<sup>6</sup> *Manuel van der Veen* examines »various media boundaries [...] where they occur in the realm of the visible« and makes use of parallels between the procedures of seemingly disparate media. By comparing trompe-l'œils with current examples of augmented reality, he not only arrives at insights into the way in which the interplay of different media and the permeability between them can be described and analyzed in both processes, but also shows that the dichotomy between digital and analogue media often produces a

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5 Bolter und Grusin 2000.

6 Casetti 2015.

rather obstructive boundary for research-based thinking. In particular, the juxtaposition of traditional, relatively well-researched media processes with new, emerging ones seems to be very fruitful for the scientific work on both processes. With reference to the examples of trompe-l'œils and AR applications, van der Veen advocates »accepting the permeable transitions between the media in order to develop knowledge about the boundaries in the transition«.

Likewise, *Jasmin Pfeiffer's* contribution shows that the consideration of media patterns and structures can be more profitable than the assumption of a disciplinary subject area with canonized works. She uses various video games and digital literature to show how ludic and literary features overlap and complement each other. In doing so, she makes large fluid border areas appear between the two media types, a fluidity which results from the mutual appropriation in practical production and can be obscured by categorical distinctions and assignments to a specific genre or type.

In her contribution »Paintings or Photographs? On Error Transitions between Media Amplified by Neural Networks«, *Ana Peraica* examines the complex transitions and interactions between painting and photography in the post-digital age. Peraica draws on the historical, mutually effective development of the two media and shows how traditional boundaries are increasingly blurred by technologically induced overlaps. She analyzes how these overlaps lead to a new aesthetic that emphasizes both abstraction and the rejection of indexicality. Her work illuminates that new aesthetic and semantic dimensions can be opened up through the manipulation of digital technologies, contributing to a deeper understanding of post-photographic art. She argues that these developments shift the perception and representation of reality in art, challenging traditional concepts of authenticity and representation.

The volume concludes with another change in perspective: away from analysis and towards the production of objects in which medial border phenomena are particularly relevant. *Andrea Rostásy* and *Tobias Sievers*, two designers, reflect on their work on the interior spaces of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. In their joint publication *Handbuch Mediatektur* from 2018, they show that not only scientific analysis, but also the production of multimedia ensembles requires a methodological and theoretical foundation. The inclusion of their work in *Spotlights on Media Borders* also strengthens the exchange between science and practice on a scientific-discursive level. Just like art treatises from the past, for example, belong to the classical repertoire of sources in Cultural Studies and Humanities dis-

ciplines, current practices like Rostásy and Sievers's designs can also be made fruitful for analyses and theoretical models. Conversely, the academic debates can provide new impulses for practice.

By bringing together diverse perspectives, the volume provides rich ground for the desired inter- and transdisciplinary discourse. It aims to enable a more comprehensive view of the possibilities for investigating and understanding media border phenomena by compiling various approaches and tapping the potential of interdisciplinary research.

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