Review Essay

Adaptation and Intermediality Studies: Handbooks and Recent Studies

Babbage, Frances. *Adaptation in Contemporary Theatre: Performing Literature.* London: Methuen, 2018. (= Methuen Drama Engage) ix, 270 pp.

Cutchins, Dennis; Krebs, Katja; Voigts, Eckart (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation.* New York and London: Routledge, 2018. (= Routledge Companions) xvi, 406 pp.

Rippl, Gabriele (ed.). *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound – Music.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015. (= Handbooks of English and American Studies, 1) x, 691 pp.

Rodosthenous, George (ed.). *Twenty-First Century Musicals: From Stage to Screen.* Foreword by Barry Keith Grant. London: Routledge, 2018. xi, 236 pp.

Reviewed by: **Nassim Winnie Balestrini** (Dept. of American Studies, University of Graz),
E-Mail: nassim.balestrini@uni-graz.at

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Since the middle of the 2000s, intermediality studies and adaptation studies scholars have been publishing multiple handbooks and numerous essay collections on current developments in theory and methodology and on their applica-

tion to specific segments of the respective field. This review essay will first introduce two massive collections (a ‘handbook’ and a ‘companion’) which intend to cover extensive ground. Then the review will turn towards a monograph by Frances Babbage and an essay collection edited by George Rodosthenous. These books tackle specific subtopics in adaptation studies which, in both cases, have not been at the forefront of research and which, thus, are welcome additions to the field. Ultimately, more dialogue and exchange between intermediality and adaptation scholars could yield helpful results for both areas of inquiry, particularly because they both engage in developing interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks and methodologies which require openness towards multiple disciplinary traditions and developments.

Illustrating the Reach of Intermediality Theory and Adaptation Studies

As the first volume in De Gruyter’s series “Handbooks of English and American Studies” (edited by Martin Middeke, Gabriele Rippl, and Hubert Zapf), the hefty *Handbook of Intermediality* sets out to provide an overview of current developments in intermediality theory and of how intermediality studies is historically embedded and intertwined with other current theories and methodologies. Following an extensive introduction by the editor, Gabriele Rippl, 34 essays are spread out under three headings: “Text and Image,” “Music, Sound, and Performance,” and “Intermedial Methodology.” The first section includes 23 essays, while the second and third sections comprise eight and three contributions respectively. This distribution illustrates the book’s focus on verbal–visual intermediality and, as the subchapters within “Text and Image” further indicate, on literature and visual media: “Ekphrasis” (seven essays), “Literature and Photography” (four essays), “Literature and the Moving Image” (five essays), “Literary Visuality and Intermedial Framing” (three essays), and “Intermedial Narration: Text–Picture Combinations” (four essays). All in all, these sections move from an intermedial relation known since classical antiquity towards contemporary forms like the graphic novel and theories like multimodality. Similarly, the subchapter on ekphrasis proceeds from traditional approaches and older primary materials to intersections between ekphrastic readings and contemporary New English literatures. The section on “Music, Sound and Performance” aptly opens with a theory chapter by Werner Wolf, whose 1999 monograph *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi) remains central to scholarly discourse on literature-music relations. As the section title indicates, the other contributions then negotiate musical and non-musical sonic features in multiple

literary genres, in the theater, in dance, and in video games, thus demonstrating the reach of this quickly diversifying area of intermedial inquiry.

Appreciating a collection of nearly three dozen scholarly essays poses pragmatic questions, even within a longer review essay such as this one. Thus, a few preliminary remarks on the overall achievement will be followed with brief discussions of contributions that this reviewer found particularly remarkable for a variety of reasons.

As Rippl's introduction to the volume amply demonstrates, intermediality studies has become a mainstay in multiple fields and, thus, intermediality theory is anything but monolithic. Multiple approaches, theorems, and methodologies coexist and compete for visibility. The handbook, thus, suggests a large framework within which to bring some of the multiple perspectives into dialogue – at least in the hypothetical handbook reader's mind. By stressing that intermediality theory serves the central purpose of being a heuristic tool (Rippl p. 2) and that intermediality studies transcends earlier schools of thought such as “interart studies” (p. 6), the editor provides the groundwork for the other contributions. She introduces the history of intermediality studies, outlines influential theoretical frameworks developed by Werner Wolf and Irina Rajewsky, and provides insights into the contemporary relevance of intermediality in multiple areas: literary theory, non-literary art forms, and cultural studies. The complex discussion of these multiple strands provides a compact, yet detailed introduction to the field of intermediality studies from the perspective of a literary scholar with ample experience in intermedial research. The essay works well for scholarly readers, but it can also be used for in-depth discussion in classroom contexts.

It is not surprising that such an extensive collection of essays will include contributions that closely engage with current intermediality theory side by side with contributions that mention intermediality theory only in passing and without in-depth consideration of its potentials. In the following, I will highlight several essays that explain intermedial analysis particularly well and/or offer points of departure for further scholarship in the field. The general strategy of offering a brief introduction, a theory section, and extended case studies serves the handbook extremely well and makes a number of essays effective university-level teaching tools.

In his chapter on “Ekphrasis and Poetry” (pp. 82–91), David Kennedy discusses what he calls “Critical Ekphrasis” (pp. 84–86) and illustrates the use of ekphrastic reading practices that focus on lyrical renderings of critical engagements with the visual in contemporary poetry. He then applies this approach to his analysis of Maggie O'Sullivan's *Tonetreks* (pp. 86–90), which culminates in his musings about contemporary ekphrastic poems concerned with depictions of the human body (p. 90). Several contributions on visual features in narrative

fiction are crucial to confirming the significance of ekphrasis in multiple genres and throughout literary history. For instance, Sylvia Karastathi's "Ekphrasis and the Novel/Narrative Fiction" (pp. 92–112) and Gabriele Rippl's "Postcolonial Ekphrasis in the Contemporary Anglophone Indian Novel" (pp. 128–155) convey in-depth theoretical considerations and their equally convincing application in the case studies. The significance of intermedial text-image relations outside of poetry or novels becomes clear in Astrid Böger's "Twentieth-century American Literature and Photography" (pp. 173–192). The discussion of so-called 'documentary books' published in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s introduces readers to a genre which, as Rippl explains in her introduction, demonstrates the applicability of intermedial analysis beyond traditional notions of what constitutes 'art.' The necessarily brief glimpses into these primary texts whet one's appetite for further research into the inner workings of such mass-market publications and their highly constructed methods of combining words and visuals. A true highlight in this section, Danuta Fjellestad's "Nesting – Braiding – Weaving: Photographic Interventions in Three Contemporary American Novels" (pp. 193–218) confirms how literary studies can benefit from taking intermedial questions seriously when fathoming artistic conceptualizations and reading/viewing practices.

Most of the contributions in "Part I: Text and Image" were written by literary scholars who possess additional expertise in the visual arts, in photography, or in film. These essays work with the assumption that two media are present or that monomedial works reference a clearly discernible non-literary medium through verbal expression. Such research is complemented (in the subsection on "Literary Visuality and Intermedial Framing" [pp. 325–377]) by Guido Isekenmeier's "Literary Visuality: Visibility – Visualisation – Description" (pp. 325–342) in the sense that he focuses on "literature's constitutive, rather than derivative, role in visual culture" (p. 325). His trajectory is, then, to explain three factors: the visual and visible features of a verbal text (pp. 328–329), the ways in which the reading process aims at producing visuals in the reader's mind (p. 329), and specific methods of verbal description geared towards visuality (pp. 330–331). Isekenmeier's approach makes a strong case for perceiving two media within a monomedial text that creates visuality without referencing extant works of the visual arts and without inventing such visual art works. The fact that specific landscapes, which are evoked in verbal texts, do exist complicates the claim, but it does not invalidate the statement regarding the 'presence' of more than one art form or medium within solely verbal literature.

The fourth section within "Part I" includes Daniel Stein's thorough engagement with intermediality theory and with its relevance for the study of "Comics and Graphic Novels" (pp. 420–438). The final and twenty-third essay on "Text

and Image,” which covers nearly 75% of the entire handbook, is Jan-Noël Thon’s theory-focused “Narratives across Media and the Outlines of a Media-conscious Narratology” (pp. 439–456). While it makes sense to close the section with such an essay, the text moves all-too-quickly from one of the pressing concerns of a media-conscious narratology to the next. The discussion of mediality, adaptation, intermediality, transmediality, and media convergence would have profited from a longer essay, possibly without the brief references to how these terms could be helpful in analyzing video games.

In his “Literature and Music: Theory” (pp. 459–474), which opens “Part II: Music, Sound and Performance,” Werner Wolf succinctly summarizes his influential theory and terminology. Beyond that, he devotes his final subchapter to describing desiderata in musico-literary studies that can transcend and complement the kind of typology which encapsulates his own system of grasping intermedial phenomena (see fig. 1 on page 468). As if in response to Wolf’s musings, the following chapters include Philipp Schweighauser’s suggestions as to how intermediality theory and sound studies can be combined (“Literary Acoustics” [pp. 475–493]) – a very welcome contribution that explains the coexistence of different approaches that may be interested in the same phenomena but that use different tools and terminologies. Birgit Neumann’s “Intermedial Negotiations: Postcolonial Literatures” (pp. 512–529) links up very well with Rippl’s essay on verbal-visual relations in postcolonial texts. Referencing Bernd Herzogenrath, Neumann emphasizes the shared concept of in-betweenness that connects postcolonial theories of a cultural ‘third space’ with intermediality (see p. 514). Furthermore, music as represented in literature becomes a site of creating and preserving cultural memory (p. 519), as Neumann demonstrates with her case studies. The remaining four essays in this section address theater, performance art, literature–dance relations, as well as videogames. Consequently, they open up vistas of areas that deserve further study from an intermedial perspective.

“Part III: Intermedial Methodology and Intersectionalities” comprises three essays, two of which were penned by Wolfgang Hallet who has published widely about multimodal analyses of literary texts. Hallet’s categories and definitions in “A Methodology of Intermediality in Literary Studies” (pp. 605–618) foster awareness of the fact that researchers need to consider the salience and the functions of intermedial features in a literary text. The presentation of Hallet’s ideas in subchapters with italicized terms and bullet-point lists invites comparative consideration with Wolf’s schematic cited before. In the closing essay, “Non-verbal Semiotic Modes and Media in the Multimodal Novel” (pp. 637–651), Hallet argues for a differentiation between a multimodal and an intermedial approach – a distinction that does not seem particularly helpful at this point. Nevertheless, the

final case study closes the circle by reverting to the beginning of the vast panorama of essays, as Hallet discusses a novel that incorporates a variety of visual components.

Overall, this handbook is a necessary and timely book. It explains the history and the development of intermediality studies. It also demonstrates how intermediality studies has been contributing to multiple other branches of literary scholarship and scholarship on other art forms. Several essays show that more dialogue between intermediality theory and adaptation theory is necessary. Some contributions try to take on these two areas of scholarly discourse, but – possibly because of the necessarily restricted word count – they do not engage in bringing the concerns and methods of both areas together in an effective manner that could push the envelope for either one. The same can be said for the ongoing debates regarding the relation between intermediality and multimodality and, beyond that, the contribution of intermediality theory to combating the “*media blindness*”¹ that plagues some narratological approaches.

The 2018 *Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, co-edited by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs, and Eckart Voigts, comprises essays by 40 contributors working mostly in literature, film, theater, performance, and adaptation studies in Australia, Europe, and North America. In an effort to show the historical dimension of adaptation studies, Cutchins integrates this relatively new designation for an area of research into classic phenomena like mimesis and ekphrasis (“Introduction to the Companion” [p. 1]). Neither in this context nor in his definition of “adaptation as a way to think about all sorts of texts, rather than as a particular kind of text” (p. 3) does Cutchins refer to intermediality theory’s orientation towards being a heuristic tool that remains open to constantly emerging new forms of interlinked media phenomena. He sees the central feature of adaptation theory in the necessarily comparative lens with which texts (in all media) are studied in conjunction with one another so that readers of this book are encouraged to “learn how to think about multiple things at the same time” (p. 3).

The 34-chapter companion is subdivided into five sections: “Mapping the Field” (pp. 5–54), “Historiography” (pp. 55–142), “Identity” (pp. 143–242), “Reception” (pp. 243–319), and “Technology” (pp. 311–402). The opening two contributions of “Mapping the Field” address possible ways of delimiting adaptation

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¹ Rajewsky, Irina. “Potential Potentials of Transmediality[:] The Media Blindness of (Classical) Narratology and Its Implications for Transmedial Approaches.” *Translatio: Transmédialité et transculturalité en littérature, peinture, photographie et au cinéma*, edited by Alfonso de Toro, L’Harmattan, 2013, p. 24.

studies in terms of its theoretical parameters and its primary materials; taking up the decades-old debate about ‘fidelity,’ the second pair of essays revisits shifting understandings of the term ‘original’ (as opposed to “adaptation”) and of adaptation as ‘translation.’ In other words, this opening section rethinks major criticisms of the limits of adaptation studies. It also again (albeit inadvertently) shows the lack of communication between adaptation studies and co-existing fields engaging similar questions. Cardwell, for instance, somewhat dismissively refers to “looser and more fashionable terms (e.g. meta- and inter-textuality, and inter- and transmediality)” (“Pause, Rewind, Replay: Adaptation, Intertextuality and (Re)defining Adaptation Studies” [p. 8]) as terms that some adaptation scholars have been using, ostensibly without improving their theoretical grasp of their research subject matter. What seems to have been lost, Cardwell finds, is the sense of studying “adaptations-as-adaptations” (p. 8), particularly because of the prevailing focus on intertextuality as understood from the perspective of cultural studies theories (pp. 8–9). Cardwell’s suggestions regarding distinctions between intertextuality and adaptation posit that adaptation goes beyond intertextuality (p. 12), that they differ on an ontological level because the reader identifies an intertextual link for the sake of interpretation whereas an adaptation is a “consciously referential, creative practice and the works arising from it” (p. 13). In contrast to her earlier statement, Cardwell then acknowledges the fruitful intersection between intermediality- and adaptation-focused perspectives: both emphasize “the complexities of movement from one medium (art form) to another” (p. 13) – which is certainly true, but does not consider that intermediality studies can also study mediality within a single work of art, even one that uses monomedial methods of representation. Nevertheless, her conclusion that “[a]daptation is a special case of both intertextuality and intermediality” (p. 14) is important and crucial. In the same vein of defining through comparison and contrast, Kamilla Elliott argues that “[u]nless we discuss adaptations in relation to each other, adaptation studies will continue to be seen as a subset of other fields, disciplines, topics, and theories, informing them while offering little insight into adaptation and adaptive processes and products” (“The Theory of *BAD*aptation” [p. 23]). Poignantly, Elliott calls for an approach in adaptation studies which refrains from adopting other theories although they cannot do justice to adaptation research; instead, studying adaptations should permit the object of study “to challenge and adapt even our most cherished theoretical beliefs” (p. 25) rather than fitting adaptations into the Procrustean bed of extant thought.

“Part II: Historiography” explores adaptation history as well as adaptation’s engagement with history and historiography. Venturing into unusual territory with her primary material, Kyle Meikle contemplates in “Adaptation and the Media” (pp. 87–96) how adaptation studies can deal with nonfictional works in

the form of nonfiction expository texts or documentary films (p. 88). Especially journalistic and social media contexts invite analyses of adaptation processes that differ from the bulk of adaptation research (p. 94) and that require the incorporation of media studies perspectives (p. 95). In a related concern with integrating adaptation studies and media studies, Riccardo Fassone argues in “Notoriously Bad: Early Film-to-Video Game Adaptations (1982–1994)” (pp. 106–116) that a media-historical analysis of adaptation provides insights into the reception processes of specific cinematic works through their – albeit ‘bad’ – video-game versions (p. 114). A very refreshing contribution in this section, Johan Callens’s “Rosas: Appropriation as Afterlife” (pp. 117–127), demonstrates the importance of detailed historical studies of appropriation and of concomitant debates about plagiarism in the realm of dance. By discussing the case of a Belgian dance company’s dance theater pieces and their appropriations by Beyoncé, Callens offers a fascinating example not only of the legal ramifications of unacknowledged appropriations but also of the economic aspects of accessibility and distribution.

The eight essays in “Part III: Identity” deal with questions of identity formation, partially inspired by Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. These questions concern specific case studies as well as the field of adaptation studies itself. Various contributions address multiple and shifting identities in order to reconsider the seemingly unavoidable discussion of competing notions of ‘fidelity’ and of what may (or may not) be considered an ‘original’ as opposed to an ‘adaptation.’ A welcome addition to the geographical reach of adaptation studies is Claire McCarthy’s “Adaptations Down Under: Reading National Identity through the Lens of Adaptation Studies” (pp. 218–231), a contribution that explores – mostly through Linda Hutcheon’s theoretical lens – specific feature films “as palimpsests” which “adapt history, national stereotypes, and genre to represent new versions of Australia’s ‘national story’” (p. 218). Katja Krebs’s “Adapting Identities: Performing the Self” (pp. 207–217) discusses “adaptation of identity and adaptation as identity” (p. 207) in the context of theater history. More particularly, the author presents case studies of performers who became ‘known’ for their assumed stage identities – as in the case of a white performer posing as a “Chinese magician” (p. 208) whose ostensibly ‘authentic’ features wanted audiences to indulge in their racist Orientalist imagination. While these are well-known examples and have been discussed by theater historians who employ postcolonial and critical race theories, Krebs demonstrates how studying adaptation practices must address both identity construction and identity maintenance, thus going beyond a single work or performance and, instead, reaching into larger predicaments of (post)colonial social structures and reception contexts.

In his introduction to “Part IV: Reception,” Dennis Cutchins also highlights the facts that adaptation studies must take reception contexts into account and that reception itself may come in myriad formats. Thus, Amanda Ruud focuses on the phenomenology of sense perception (“Embodying Change: Adaptation, the Senses, and Media Revolution” [pp. 245–255]) in her study of silent films that transport Shakespeare’s words through visuals and gestures. Ruud’s argument, among other things, in favor of addressing “a reflection on changing media” because “technological transformation brings with it a new experiential apparatus which adaptations can both employ and interrogate” (p. 247) again points at the need for closer engagement with medium-specific concerns regarding the mechanisms of meaning-making and audience appeal (or even “enchantment” [p. 255]) as well as regarding historical change within the media landscape. Further contributions study radio adaptations and their listeners as well as specific kinds of television crime shows. Anna Blackwell’s “Tweeting from the Grave: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Social Media” (pp. 287–230) then contemplates social media users and particularly fan groups as recipients, taking Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green’s *Spreadable Media* (New York: New York UP, 2013) as a point of departure. The section concludes with a plea for an increased use of reception theory in adaptation scholarship, as formulated by Cutchins and his co-author Katy Meeks in “Adaptation, Fidelity and Reception” (pp. 301–310). This plea incorporates numerous anecdotes of reception experiences and speaks up in favor of assessing the subjectivity inherent in individual reception. Cutchins and Meeks do not claim that this insight and the shadow of doubt that it casts over standards of scholarly objectivity can be easily poured into specific analytical criteria. What their account does achieve, however, is a redefinition of ‘fidelity’ in the context of adaptation: that is, fidelity to the emotional response and specific experience of an individual responding to an adaptation.

The volume concludes with eight essays subsumed under the heading of “Part V: Technology.” The titular term is used very broadly, as the opening essay demonstrates. Joyce Goggin’s analysis of the visual qualities of Charles Dickens’s writing discusses the mediality of the literary text in terms of its verbalization of ideas as well as the significance of this process for subsequent cross-medial adaptations (“Adaptation from the Temporal to the Spatial: Materialising Dickens’s Imaginings” [pp. 314–326]). Further fascinating questions as to how technologies of media impact adaptation processes, products, and reception experiences are found in Bernadette Cochrane’s “Blurring the Lines: Adaptation, Transmediality, Intermediality and Screened Performance” (pp. 340–348). Digital technologies have opened up new opportunities for making stage performances available beyond a specific place and point in time, and the experience of viewing a stage performance on a cinema screen locates such technology at the center of

reception contexts. In her use of the terms intermediality and transmediality, Cochrane does not include the larger field of inter- and transmediality theory but relies on theater scholarship and on a technology-focused definition of ‘medium,’ which contrasts live performance and relay under the overarching question as to whether and, if so, how viewers in the movie theater experience what they see as an adaptation. This area of inquiry, then, links up nicely with Malcolm Cook and Max Sexton’s “Adaptation as a Function of Technology and Its Role in the Definition of Medium Specificity” (pp. 361–371), which also intervenes in the discussion of how digital technologies have changed production and reception possibilities (p. 362) and whether digitization has done away with outmoded ideas about medium specificity (p. 363). Adaptation studies would then be helpful in studying how medium-specificity evolves and changes over time (p. 363) – an overall concern shared by intermediality scholars like Marie-Laure Ryan and Werner Wolf (p. 362). Cook and Sexton cogently conclude that technology serves “as a critical site for the construction of medium definitions” (p. 369). Not surprisingly, the closing chapter brings the discussion of adaptation and technology into the realm of online forms and thus again confirms the historical breadth and contemporaneity of adaptation as a lens of scholarly engagement. Eckart Voigts argues in “Memes, GIFs, and Remix Culture: Compact Appropriation in Everyday Digital Life” (pp. 390–402) that mashing and remixing represent prominent forms of “cultural appropriation” (p. 391). He then develops his case for what he calls “recombinant appropriation” (p. 391), a process in which extant cultural products are fragmented and reconstituted into new cultural products. While technological means have changed, Voigts regards “the grotesque micronarratives we have seen in the current GIFs” as having historical predecessors such as the “phenakistoscope” (p. 400) of the 1820s.

The Routledge Companion to Adaptation offers, as shown, a broad exploration of adaptation studies. Scholars critically debate terms and blind spots within the field, while they also demonstrate the continued viability of theoretical concepts put forward by prominent thinkers in the field.

From Page to Stage

Subdivided into five chapters enveloped by an introduction and a conclusion, Frances Babbage (*Adaptation in Contemporary Theatre: Performing Literature*) discusses the relation between theater and adaptation, thus emphasizing that – besides the seemingly ‘classic’ reduction of adaptation to novels turned into films – adaptation studies has much to offer when it comes to understanding other art forms. Rather than wanting to offer a thorough theorization of adapta-

tion within theater and performance, Babbage applies principles of adaptation to the relation between drama and its realization: "... the majority of adaptations considered here can be more accurately described as textual re-sitings, within which connections and disjunctions between the contents, forms and contexts of literature and performance are exposed" (p. 3). Thus, any performance or, as the author terms it, each "production's operation" (p. 4) becomes an adaptation. In addition to this specifically theater praxis-focused narrowing of the term, Babbage proposes to use an ekphrastic lens in order to fathom "the capacity and limits of one art form to convey the qualities of another" (p. 5).

Following these introductory statements, one would expect the first chapter, "Adaptation and the Theatre" (pp. 9–44), to elucidate the theoretical framework in more detail. The chapter references numerous primary works as well as statements by theater practitioners and scholars. It revisits some of the arguments within the so-called and – by now – mostly discredited 'fidelity discourse,' which stipulated that adaptations were necessarily second-rate works, if not downright acts of treachery in their treatment of a sacrosanct 'original' work (see pp. 39–40). Babbage contrasts this view with more recent adaptation theories by Linda Hutcheon (pp. 35, 42) and Robert Stam (p. 35). The chapter ends (p. 44) with summarily describing adaptations as process and product (without, however, citing Hutcheon, who uses these two central aspects as the point of departure for her seminal *A Theory of Adaptation* [2006; 2nd rev. ed. 2012]). This chapter, unfortunately, does not offer anything new regarding adaptation theory. The impetus towards thinking specifically about drama performance as a form of adaptation because a written text comes to life on the stage in a different manner than during the process of reading gets lost in a compendium of references to primary and secondary materials that show that one can look at performance from various angles.

Nevertheless, the research questions posed in subsequent chapters provide much food for thought regarding adaptation studies and intermediality theory. (Babbage uses the term "intermedial" – in single quotation marks – once [see p. 11] but does not engage with intermediality theory.) The focus of chapter 2, "Performing Books" (pp. 45–78), is "what the dimension of performance, of liveness, can bring to a book: further, it asks what a book – and beyond this, *bookness* – might bring to performance" (p. 45). This question deserves scrutiny from the perspective of adaptation, because an exploration of a specific extant artefact becomes the point of departure for a younger artefact, *and* from the perspective of intermediality theory, which explores (among other things) the in-between spaces of adaptation and of plurimedial works. The latter exploration differs from the former, for instance, in that it allows a perspective on reciprocity that is not limited by chronology. In other words, studying the medium-specific

features of two works designated as pre-existing ‘original’ and subsequent ‘adaptation’ opens up possibilities of thinking about the mediality of both works individually *and* in conjunction with one another. The five case studies, Babbage argues,

testify to the potency not simply of narratives but of books themselves as talismanic, yet vulnerable objects, and celebrate the capacity of readers to make any text meaningfully their own. Additionally, [...] the explicit articulation of ‘bookness’ in all of these productions serves to underline the distinctive qualities of each medium in play [...] and to expose points of friction between them (p. 45).

Poignantly, this focus on the culturally embedded meaning of the book’s materiality demonstrates the necessity to consider more than the narrative contained in the book. The performances described in this chapter make a good case for giving performances their due as artistic works in themselves. The actual discussion, as in the opening chapter, falls short of innovative insights; describing a performance as an “edition” (pp. 69, 78) is simply another way of focusing on adaptation as process and does not provide further results. It is also puzzling that, while some of the works are convincingly subsumed under Hutcheon’s characterization of adaptations (e.g., p. 70), the author then uses the diction of pre-Hutcheon fidelity discourse when she refers – without further discussion – to another work as “plundering” (p. 71) an earlier text.

Chapter 3, “Story: Adaptation and the Act of Telling” (pp. 79–114), takes up one of the well-established tensions central to adaptation studies: “preservation” versus “transformation” (p. 82). An extensive account of research on fairy tales and folk tales (pp. 83–90) is followed by the description of performance adaptations of works by Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm Brothers. These recent performances amply speak in favor of the power of theater as a polymedial art and multisensory experience. The fifth and final analytical chapter, “Resisting Adaptation” (pp. 165–211), turns to prose fiction that is ostensibly unsuitable for adaptation and asks how adapters proceeded when they created their theater pieces, namely by focusing on the respective novel’s “unsettling effects” (p. 171). Again, the reader is introduced to contemporary works, but the discussion does not result in pushing adaptation theory any further.

More clearly geared towards theory-oriented research questions, chapter 4, “Layered Space: Adaptation, Immersion and Site” (pp. 115–163), enquires into “adaptations created for site-specific, promenade and immersive theatre” and, in particular, asks how theatrical “adaptations [of prose narratives] address the complex relationships between [...] external landscapes and the inner ‘worlds’ of fictional characters” (p. 115). This chapter, then, presents the most convincing and theory-advancing discussion of adaptations that cross the boundary between

prose fiction and theater performance. It also branches out into the ethical issues involved in immersive theater that pressures viewers into feeling like (unwilling and voyeuristic) accomplices to atrocities. Babbage highlights how the sensory impressions gathered at specifically designed performance locations can be key to an experience of immersion that aims at creating the same impact as immersing oneself in the aesthetic illusion of a book's narrated world. As the author cogently argues, theater can consciously use the possibilities inherent in the fact that performance takes place in three-dimensional and multi-sensory environments, in order to imitate specific manners of positioning readers in relation to stories (p. 136). It becomes impressively clear how Edgar Allan Poe's conceptualization of literature's desired 'unity of effect' can, in turn, be regarded as expressing the potential impact of a theater performance which an audience member experiences within a specific space and tied to a predetermined duration (p. 137). In this context, Babbage reminds her readers of the important consideration as to whether audience members will process, in this case, a stage adaptation culled from nine stories by Poe simply as a play or as an adaptation (p. 138). The conclusion of this chapter makes useful inroads into how adaptation studies can discuss the genre-specific semiotics and semantics of space found in narrative fiction and in theatrical performance – namely in a manner that provides further insight into the respective medial and generic meaning-producing mechanisms (pp. 161–163).

The brief conclusion (pp. 213–218) rightly claims that the case studies demonstrate “that theatre's practices of adaptation are artistically innovative, critically complex, conceptually ambitious, formally various and fully vital” (p. 213). Furthermore, the monograph effectively encourages adaptation scholars to direct more attention to “live performance” (p. 215). Babbage's monograph will, one would hope, inspire further research on theater praxis from the perspective of adaptation theory. More work on the affordances of performance in its myriad forms and contexts is highly desirable. Additionally, the interdisciplinary field would benefit from even more rigorous engagement with adaptation theory in such analyses.

From Musical Theater to Musical Film

George Rodosthenous's essay collection *Twenty-First Century Musicals: From Stage to Screen* brings together contributions by fourteen scholars and artists working in the UK and the US, and representing academic fields including music history, popular music, musical theater, theater and performance, media studies, film studies, literature, and drama, as well as artistic praxis like writing plays and

lyrics, actor training, and directing. Framing this interdisciplinary array of essays with an introduction and a conclusion, Rodosthenous describes the main trajectory of the essay collection as exploring how “film adaptations [of stage musicals] provide new contexts, layers and dimensions of meaning” (p. 1). More importantly, the editor astutely argues that, first, massive changes in the stage musical and in filmic adaptations since 2000 have led to “revolutions in narrative, sexual and racial politics, linear representation and thematic content” (p. 2). And that, second, “reality competition shows and the television series *Glee* (as well as *Smash*)” (p. 3) have primed young audiences to appreciate both stage musicals and their film adaptations. Rodosthenous even announces a planned second volume of essays that will cover works up to the year 2020 (p. 4). Despite the innovative impetus of the prompt provided to the contributors, which includes questions regarding not only contents and style but also casting and viewing experiences, the closing question embraces the evaluative stance of “[w]hat is lost/gained in the process of adaptation to film?” which has been hounding adaptation research (also see p. 8). Covering the state of research in about three book pages with a large illustration in the middle (see pp. 8–11) seems more hurried than productive, but the attached bibliography includes quite a number of seminal texts. The same applies to the very brief conclusion, which nevertheless pinpoints the revolutionary changes in the stage musical as well as the increased foregrounding of political issues “in a way that resists the utopian and critically engages with the performative” (p. 231).

Through the best essays in this volume, this edited collection makes two important contributions to the field. First, several studies vividly demonstrate how adaptation studies can fruitfully intersect with other theoretical perspectives, such as disability studies and masculinity studies. Second, three essays each discuss a triad (rather than just a pair) of works; they thus illustrate not only the fact that certain stories have inspired a string of versions in multiple media and genres, but the sociohistorical contextualization of each work highlights the significant impact of the respective political climate in which each artefact was created and received.

Jessica Sternfeld’s “Ready for His Close-Up: From Horror to Romance in *The Phantom of the Opera*” (pp. 53–65) discusses four central differences between Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical (London 1986, New York 1988) and the film version (2004). In the film, the Phantom’s face is hardly deformed so that the only remaining barrier between him and Christine, the female lead, appears to be the fact that the Phantom is a social outcast. Furthermore, the film works with the “complete erasure of all of the Phantom’s magical unexplained powers and fears” (p. 54) and adds a backstory that both explains the Phantom’s crimes and elicits sympathy for him. Finally, the central characters in the film are considerably

younger than the ones in the musical so that the plot has more to do with the palpitations of youthful romantic love. Thus, Sternfeld argues,

by making the Phantom more handsome, more human, and more sympathetic, the message that Christine could never choose him over Raoul is meant to be more romantic and heart-breaking, but becomes instead a harsh indictment of our own social expectations and stigmas about disability (p. 54).

By reading both works through the lens of disability studies, it becomes clear that the stage and film versions make two disparate arguments about the phantom (p. 64). Reminiscent of such a massive change, Sarah Whitfield perceives a genre-based shift in the transformation of the jukebox musical *Jersey Boys* into a film directed by Clint Eastwood (“‘You wanna hear the real story?’ (Mis)remembering Masculinity in Clint Eastwood’s Adaptation of *Jersey Boys*” [pp. 149–163]). She argues that the adaptation process has “exacerbated the work’s underlying problems in its presentation of gender, sexuality and race” (p. 150). In particular, the film tries to delete the musical theater elements, ostensibly because they are not commensurate with a Clint Eastwood–style masculinity (p. 153). As a result, “African American musical identity – or even existence” (p. 158) becomes invisible. Whitfield presents a nuanced discussion of how genre differences and, in the case of the film, the ideological focus on promoting a type of white masculinity that centers on male heterosexual desire and fulfilment (pp. 160–161) produced erasure. At the same time, she explains that the musical already contained problematic representation strategies which the jukebox style attempted to gloss over. Complementing Whitfield’s genre-specific analysis, Sarah Browne’s “The Last Five Years: Medium, Mode and the Making of *Cathy*” (pp. 181–195) offers detailed insight into film semiotics. In particular, Browne categorizes film musicals as predominately formalist rather than realist in mode (p. 187) and then proceeds to discuss genre differences within films and within film musicals.

Another excellent discussion of genre features can be found in Demetris Zavros’s essay on “*London Road*: The ‘Irruption of the Real’ and Haunting Utopias in the Verbatim Musical” (pp. 212–229). Comparable to verbatim theater, the verbal text of the musical *London Road* is based on interviews (p. 212). Zavros explores this rather realist approach in contrast to the utopian approach used in the majority of film musicals (p. 214). As a result, he argues that new genres are evolving both in the musical and in the film musical. Aesthetic innovation, Zavros finds, can occur simultaneously with foregrounding the “politics of perception” which determines audience members’ responses to music, language, notions of what is ‘real’ and what is ‘performed’ (p. 226). This contribution’s fine-tuned exploration of genre, of adaptation processes, of multiple steps of adaptation, and of historical and sociopolitical contexts of the genesis and the

reception of specific works constitutes an impressive advance in adaptation studies.

The same rings true for several essays included in *Twenty-First Century Musicals: From Stage to Screen* which tackle a string of related works. Taking the idea of ‘unadaptability’ as his point of departure, Robert Gordon’s “All That Jazz: The Difficult Journey of *Chicago* from Stage to Screen” (pp. 34–52) addresses the challenges of making a film musical based on a musical that, in turn, presents a 1920s play as a vaudeville show (p. 34). Whereas the musical focuses on stage performance as a metaphor for life-as-performance and on thus critiquing the social consequences of rampant capitalism (pp. 35–36), the film version belongs to the “gangster film musical” (p. 41) genre. This transformation results from combining a realist filmic mode with vaudeville numbers ‘performed’ in the mind of a character desirous of escaping into a fantasy world (p. 42). According to Gordon, the slick visuals of these scenes take the bite out of the social criticism (pp. 45, 49). Above and beyond such genre- and medium-based differences of effect, Gordon convincingly explains the diverging impacts of the stage musical and the film musical through the political climate of the 1990s and the post-9/11 era respectively (p. 50). Julian Woolford uses a similar strategy in “Where Did We Go Right (and Wrong)? Success and Failure in the Adaptations of *The Producers* from and to the Screen” (pp. 80–93). Using a clear-cut methodology based on Linda Hutcheon’s theory of adaptation (pp. 83–84), Woolford discusses Mel Brooks’s 1967 film, the early-twenty-first-century Broadway musical version, and the film musical based on the latter. Contextualizing the middle work in musical history, we learn that

[w]ith regard to the referencing of other musicals, it is [...] possible to consider *The Producers* as the beginning of the period of meta-musical comedy, the self-referencing of musicals for comic effect evident in *Spamalot*, *Avenue Q* and *Urinetown*, which reached its apotheosis in *Title of Show*” (p. 90).

As in Gordon’s essay, the social climate of the post-9/11 era (pp. 91–92) is evoked as crucial to the success or failure of specific works. Finally, Linda Mokdad’s “At the Intersection of Music, Sexuality and Race: *Hairspray*’s Generic and Aesthetic Variances” (pp. 110–120) zeroes in on the 1988 film, the 2002 stage play, and the 2007 film musical. These works present similar plotlines, but “their deviating generic and aesthetic strategies help to explain their divergent constructions of otherness” (p. 110). A comparison of the first film and the second film reveals that musical numbers by black artists were dropped and that the focus was shifted to the main character’s narrative (p. 113). Both the middle and the newest versions tone down the political critique inherent in the 1988 film (pp. 114–119).

Rodosthenous's edited collection makes an important contribution to adaptation studies, as a sizeable number of essays engage with adaptation theory and with other current theoretical concerns in a manner that facilitates in-depth analysis of genre, media, production and reception contexts, and historical contexts and developments. All in all, the bulk of the examples discussed in the volume indicates that the post-9/11 era has fostered nostalgic and escapist tendencies. It remains to be seen how the projected second volume will depict developments during the second decade of the twenty-first century. Particularly the long-term historical perspective and the interest in advanced interdisciplinary adaptation studies bodes well for pushing the field forward.

Concluding Thoughts

When reading scholarly publications about intersecting fields of inquiry, one may be struck by how even adjacent fields do not seek to communicate with one another. Separate scholarly organizations and networks, a history of specific approaches and terminologies – factors such as these may keep scholars apart who actually share more than they might think. To my mind, adaptation studies could benefit from the systematic approach in intermediality studies regarding medium-specific affordances and the 'in-between' spaces of cross-medial adaptation. At the same time, intermediality theory – which has been crawling out of its literature-based and narratology-focused shell – could develop its tools for contextual analysis also via the insights of adaptation studies. Just as intermediality theorists have used the term adaptation without the degree of nuance that an adaptation scholar would require, researchers in adaptation refer to intermediality and transmediality without displaying much awareness of the internal debates within those fields. This situation will hopefully change in years to come.