Over the past few decades, interdisciplinarity has been gaining in popularity. In some contexts, it even seems to have become a “must” for innovative and successful research, the sine qua non for certain funding contexts. Indeed, interdisciplinarity can be extremely beneficial, and to enter a dialogue with other disciplines enables entirely unforeseen approaches, questions, and outcomes. It fosters, to borrow formulations from Dame Gillian Beer, the transformation of ideas and the destabilisation of knowledge, and thus helps “uncover problems disguised by the scope of established disciplines” (Beer 115). Interdisciplinarity is fundamentally, and productively, transgressive, and this already signals its appeal to literary and cultural scholars.

Yet interdisciplinarity also comes with its problems, both on a purely pragmatic as well as on a conceptual level. Knowledge from other fields can be difficult to acquire, and sufficient “interiority” (Shattock 54) to other disciplines almost impossible to gain. Indeed, how much we need to learn of other skills and about other processes of enquiry in order to enter a dialogue with representatives of other fields, what, in other words, is deemed “enough” knowledge, remains a complex question. What some see as interdisciplinarity, others dismiss as a mere retooling of concepts from other disciplines (see Huggan), and the boundaries and transitions between multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are sometimes hard to gauge. It also makes a difference whether interdisciplinarity is pursued on an individual level, or within larger networks. Moreover, while some fields and research contexts allow us to make productive use of our core competencies as scholars in literary and cultural studies, we can be little more than either amateurs or marginal contributors in other fields. Thus, interdisciplinary research contexts frequently also challenge us to defend our own discipline and to reflect on the legitimacy and “relevance” of the questions and forms of analysis that typically concern us.
This section aims to explore the challenges and difficulties of interdisciplinary research as much as its benefits. Fields of enquiry may include collaboration between literary/cultural studies and the natural and life sciences (biology, chemistry, climate research, physics, medicine, etc.), and the social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science, etc.). Basically, the section asks how we “do” interdisciplinarity both in research and in teaching. Papers might address, but are not limited to, the following aspects:

- What literary studies has to offer to other disciplines, both through its subject matter and material, as well as through its specific methodologies, forms of enquiry, and types of analysis.
- The communication between different fields and their representatives.
- The role of literature and literary studies for the grand societal challenges, and the “relevance” of our discipline.
- Historical perspectives on interdisciplinarity and its changing meanings and practices.
- Specific fields of interdisciplinarity, such as cognitive literary studies, ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, literature and science research, literary and cultural urban studies, literature and political science, literature and economics, literature and material culture.

## SECTION OUTLINE

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Prof Dr Jens Martin Gurr, PD Dr Ursula Kluwick  

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**SUMMARY**  
Prof Dr Jens Martin Gurr, PD Dr Ursula Kluwick
13 years ago, when the Anglistentag still had a plenary panel session, the topic of this panel discussion was “Interdisciplinarity”, and I (Dirk Vanderbeke) contributed a paper “Wie interdisziplinär is interdisziplinär?” For this paper, I chose 50 articles from 2003, the titles of which indicated an interdisciplinary approach, and I checked the bibliographies to find out what kind of secondary literature from which academic fields had actually been used in the research. The result varied strongly, depending on the chosen “other” discipline. In interdisciplinary research on literature and art, film and music, for example, almost half of the secondary texts originated in these disciplines. The situation was quite different in research on literature and science or economics, where far fewer texts from scientists and economists were taken into consideration. In general, it was noticeable that proximity of the academic fields increased the willingness to engage with literature from the respective field.

In our joint paper for this year, we will update these findings, i.e. we will use the same method to see whether the approaches to interdisciplinary research have changed. We will check the bibliographies of books and articles from 2017 to gauge whether the tenet that interdisciplinarity requires familiarity with the respective fields of enquiry is reflected in the secondary literature employed in the research.
Postcolonial studies have initiated shifts towards transcultural, translocal, and transdisciplinary perspectives, raising new questions about received ideas and familiar fields such as travel writing, autobiography, or the many perspectives on the English literary canon. One area that has not yet been so extensively studied is the poetic representation of contemporary South Asian and Asian metropolises (e.g. Rao; Ho and Stierstorfer; Herbert; Sandten).

Generally, metropolises are characterised by intensified, augmented diversity and contrasting architectural manifestations as well as by vertical and horizontal urban density and complexity. In addition, an energetic bustling atmosphere often pervades the city. These images are associated with Western metropolises such as London, Paris, or New York, which have become the cultural and architectural epitomes of the modern city. The notion of the postcolonial metropolis, however, alludes to the multi-layered and stratified ways of life inside, as well as outside, city centres, and, often, to the ‘downside’ of cityscapes in postcolonial societies. This holds true for the Indian metropolis ‘Bombay,’ a city that, due to its colonial past and amplified contemporary present, can be identified as a postcolonial metropolis. This metropolis often discloses its own subversive urban aesthetic of underworlds morphing into overworlds (Mehta 2008), where tradition, modernity, postcoloniality and postmodernity collide in the most unrelenting and dynamic fashion, revealing the limits of Western concepts and models of urbanity and modernity. Addressing the question of how cityscapes have been aesthetically depicted in all of their urban complexity in literature, my paper, through a close reading of selected poems, aims to show that the postcolonial city of ‘Bombay’ is a metropolis that does not lend itself to easy poetic description and condensation. Instead, ‘Bombay’ poems bear features of dynamism and multiple layering that are rendered via a vivid poetics of location and dislocation, or upside and downside. By way of an interdisciplinary approach, here urban studies (e.g. “cityness,” Simone) and postcolonial textuality (e.g. “postcolonial flânerie,” Hartwiger; “poetic geography”), I will provide verification of how I address interdisciplinarity as it relates to urban studies and postcolonial poetry in research and teaching.
BETTER STORIES ABOUT SCIENCE? THE CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE NOVEL AND THE FIELD OF ‘LITERATURE AND SCIENCE’

PROF DR ANTON KIRCHHOFER OLDENBURG

SLOT  Monday 1:15–3 pm          ROOM  S 120, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

My contribution will address issues of ‘literature and science studies’ as interdisciplinary practice. In looking at its potentials as well as the challenges and obstacles it faces, I will build on my perspective of a member of the research group “Fiction Meets Science” (fictionmeetsscience.org). This group has been funded by the Volkswagen Foundation since 2013, in a funding format designed, among other things, to highlight the role of literature and literary studies in grand societal challenges. And it has, at least to my knowledge, a unique composition, since it involves novelists who have written or are writing ‘science novels’ – as we have come to designate fiction in which scientific practice and scientific concepts play a central role both thematically and in relation to textual structures –, it involves scientists whose disciplines and practices are becoming the object of fictional representation, as well as literary scholars and social scientists who are seeking to work together on a larger range of such novels and other fictional narratives.

I will briefly outline the formats of interdisciplinary practice devised and practiced within this group, and equally briefly discuss the rationale for devising these formats against the background of a rough historical sketch of successive phases and (inter)disciplinary status of the field of literature and science studies, as well as a side-glance at the goals and structures of other current interdisciplinary research groups in the field. Against this background I will review methodological aspects of interdisciplinarity from the perspective of literary studies, discussing ways of making analytical work relate both to the disciplinary interests of literary studies as well as to the questions and issues which engage other agents and participants in the public and internal arenas of discourses on science.

Specifically this will bear on the connections which may be forged between practices of close reading and textual analysis, between practices of discourse analysis, and between analyses of readerly engagement and ‘recognition,’ which takes these terms and develops them beyond the already useful forms which they have taken on in the thinking of Rita Felski (cf. The Uses of Literature, 2009).

Of course, such an endeavour is beset by multiple risks of mutual misconceptions and misunderstandings. But it also has the potential to shed light on the significant and persistent demand for – more and better – stories about science, both on the part of the wider public and on the part of scientists themselves, on the ways in which literary fiction has begun to join the negotiation of this demand, and not least on the role which literary studies can play in enabling the various potentials of recognition this affords.
This paper draws on the experience of a literary studies scholar working on risk perception and management. Focussing on collaborative research on health risk with scholars in medicine and the health sciences, risk is a concept which epitomizes typical challenges and benefits of ‘doing’ interdisciplinarity. The former include that literary studies’ view on risk might be denied by the hard sciences what Latour called “the pleasure of producing one fact” (in Kofman). While, this paper argues, literature offers valuable insight into the genealogy of risk in different socio-cultural contexts and the constructedness of medical ‘facts’ in the sense of Fleck’s ‘thought styles,’ as well as into human reasoning and patterns of risk behaviour in non-/fictional narratives, a pitfall in interdisciplinary communication is that of being assigned the role of historian or pseudo-psychologist. Literary studies’ competence in interpreting narratives, however, might also require negotiation, for example with regard to the understanding of narrative (interviews) geared towards producing statistical evidence in a clinical context.

Though a majority of risk theory comes from sociology, the term has diverging and even opposing meanings and applications in different fields. The health sciences employ a concept of risk as measurable uncertainty, driven by an action-oriented paradigm of prevention and “evidence-based” medicine. Preventing or minimizing risk being the predominant discursive goal, a problem is trying to manage the growing amount of complex information for health-related decision-making and people’s ‘irrational’ responses to ‘factual’ health risks. However, referring originally neutrally to the objective estimation of possible events, the mainly negative association of risk with danger of loss and the avoidance paradigm dominant in the health sciences today is only shaped in the course of the 19th century as a result of the reduction of complexity by standardizations invented in that period. Exploring the evolution and currency of risk from the joint perspectives of philosophy of science, cultural sociological theory and literary studies opens a wider background for understanding health risk narratives; it also accounts for risk’s focus on agency and the emotional component it comprises besides probabilities. Risk is tied to storytelling as a means of constructing meaning, causal coherence and dealing with uncertainty. It forms an integral part of (self-)narration as well as dialogic interactions, and it sublimates accidents, hopes and fears into ‘storied’ lives. Consequently, interdisciplinary risk
research has much to gain from the analyses of narratives at micro or macro levels offered by literary criticism.


**INTERDISCIPLINARITY ACROSS THE “TWO-CULTURES”**

**PD DR MARCUS HARTNER** BIELEFELD

**SLOT** Monday 3:30–5 pm **ROOM** S 120, Seminargebäude, 1st Floor

The idea of interdisciplinarity has retained a generally positive image over the past decades. Many institutes for advanced studies enjoy an excellent academic reputation and research foundations such as the *DFG* actively promote interdisciplinary exchange by funding collaborative research centres (*SFBs*) and interdisciplinary research networks. Promoting dialogue between disciplines is widely acknowledged as a productive research strategy that can lead to new questions and the development of unforeseen approaches. Yet, despite this general praise, interdisciplinarity remains a double-edged sword. Not only does it come with a variety of pragmatic and conceptual problems, but the pursuit of research situated between different disciplines can both benefit and harm academic careers. This particularly pertains to attempts at bridging what Charles P. Snow has famously called the “two cultures.”

My paper addresses the conceptual and pragmatic challenges faced by interdisciplinary work situated at the intersection of literary studies and science. Drawing on the example of cognitive approaches to literature, I will discuss scholarly concerns about the ‘nature’ and ‘purpose’ of the humanities as well as some of the epistemological and methodological tensions characterising the endeavour of integrating empirical (cognitive) science into (non-empirical) literary and cultural studies. Problems such as the “explanatory gap” between mind and brain (Levin), or the (allegedly) different aims of scientific and literary research (Adler and Gross) have given rise to an extensive critical debate on the potential, the scope, and the problems of this particular field of study (e.g. Jackson; Adler and Gross; Zymner; Hartner). Taking this debate as a starting point, I will outline some of the major challenges and pitfalls faced by scientific approaches in the humanities and attempt to reflect on potential ways of conceptualising and engaging with such research in a methodologically sound way.
‘Law and literature’ first emerged as an element of legal education at American law schools during the 1970s, and has since become a regular part of the legal curriculum in the U.S. The establishment of courses in the field was initially an attempt to replenish law students’ ‘dry’ legal studies with the spark of ‘real life’ and emotion which, proponents of the movement argued, legal education did not provide. In the early days of law and literature, then, literature was habitually constructed as a means to restore a humane element to legal studies, employed to ‘repair’ a perceived lack in legal education and legal practice. Not surprisingly, this aspect of law and literature has elicited criticism from literary scholars, who have highlighted the tendency of law and literature to treat literature as an emotional supplement to law rather than accepting it as an equal partner in an interdisciplinary venture that comes with its own disciplinary traditions and terminology. Law and literature has since evolved into a complex interdisciplinary field which entails its own springs and snares. The problem of interdisciplinarity in this field, first depicted comprehensively by US-American legal scholar Jane B. Baron in 1999, is partly due to a distinct lack of academic mindfulness and self-consciousness, and has led to a fracturing of the movement into a “multiplicity of approaches and concerns” that “may lead skeptics to dismiss law and literature as an empty vessel, a phrase devoid of content” (1062). Apart from the various criticisms directed against the field as a whole, scholars rightly bemoan literary academics’ lack of legal knowledge and legal academics’ lack of literary knowledge, respectively, and demand serious reflection of the socio-cultural contexts of specific laws and literatures. Nevertheless, academic interest in the interrelations of the legal and the literary is still in full swing. Law and literature (and ‘law and the humanities’ or ‘law and culture’) seems to be in the middle of developing into a diverse interdisciplinary field influenced not only by literary studies and literary theory but also by cultural studies. In this paper, I would like to explore the history of law and literature as well as the more recent incarnations of the field, discuss a project which took interdisciplinarity seriously by bringing together early modern literature and contemporary law – the Shakespeare Moot Court Project (Manderson & Yachnin, 2002–2007) – and shed some light on the possible interconnections of law and literature with the (generic) laws of literature in my own take on the field.

The relationship between literary and cultural studies and business studies has long been a difficult one. Whilst a number of subfields of business studies, such as critical management studies and organisation studies, have drawn diversely on the humanities including literary and cultural studies as a source for inspiration, traffic in the opposite direction remains scarce. Steeped in (post-)Marxist doubts as to the moral integrity of anything ‘business,’ and aggravated by recent structural changes in Britain’s university landscape, literary and cultural studies scholars tend to consider the research that comes out of business schools in generically negative terms; particularly where a destructive ‘managerialism’ is perceived to be entering higher education, (potential) crossovers between business studies and the humanities are viewed with suspicion, or cynicism (e.g. Westall; Eagleton; Brouillette). This complicates interdisciplinary work. As Mrinalini Greharry and Pasi Ahonen observe in a rare instance of cooperation between literary studies and critical management, they have had to defend themselves repeatedly against disbelief and hostility from literary scholars, needing to reassure them that “a turn to management and organization perspectives is not a turn to managerialism or a backhanded way of slipping the objectives of neo-liberal management of higher education into humanities research” (49–66). What is frequently overlooked is that business schools are no disciplinary monoliths, let alone ideological ones, and that they can harbour not only mainstream U.S. American management approaches but also a range of heterodox fields from critical management studies to feminist and islamic economics (see also Zein-Elabdin; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela). Where debates about economy and business do become relevant in literary and cultural studies, they are typically informed not by a diverse spectrum of business or economics research but, as Lawrence Grossberg has suggested, by a set of (over-)familiar economic theories that “we already know we are likely to agree with” (Grossberg 106). At the same time, negative notions of ‘business’ are embraced for identitarian politics where ‘business’ and related notions such as ‘capitalism’ are constructed by literary and cultural studies scholars as morally inferior ‘Others’ and a constitutive outside.

Building on my interdisciplinary background in both literary and cultural studies and business administration, and my transdisciplinary conceptualisations of the market as a performative dimension of practice (see my Critical Branding), I discuss in this talk the frequently politicised, mutual positionings; existing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary crossovers and projects; as well as my own work as a conceptual background for exploring – not the differences – but overlaps and crossovers between the work and practices of those doing literature and those doing business.