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## **Uneasy Forms of Interdisciplinarity: Literature, Business Studies, and the Limits of Critique**

### **1. From Economic Criticism to Literary Business Studies**

Literary studies' engagement with, broadly, 'economy' is long-standing and extensive. 'Economic Criticism' in particular, which arose in the mid-nineteenth century and which is going to be understood here as including the 1990s New Economic Criticism (Woodmansee and Osteen 1999),<sup>1</sup> has become well-known for its history of critical, often interdisciplinary, approaches to economic issues and their various entanglements with literatures and cultures. Ellen Grünkemeier, Nora Plesske, and Joanna Rostek provide an astute summary of Economic Criticism's various tenets, suggesting that the field

(i) analyses how the economy and what is seen as its constitutive elements (e.g. money, consumption, economic agents) are represented in literature, film, visual arts, etc.; (ii) studies non-fiction about the economy (e.g. the foundational texts of classical political economy or Marxism) as primary literature; (iii) scrutinises activities and phenomena associated with the economy (e.g. shopping, work, class) with methodologies of cultural and literary studies; (iv) investigates how economic frameworks influence the creation of literary and cultural products as well as the production of knowledge in academic disciplines; (v) explores points of convergence between terms, concepts and methods of economics, literary and cultural studies (e.g. circulation, representation, value, utility). (2018, 117)

As this overview indicates, Economic Criticism is a scholarly discourse that covers a broad range of scholarly pursuits from more classic literary and cultural studies approaches (such as the representation *of* economy) to more meta-discursive, at times interdisciplinarity-oriented efforts (Grünkemeier, Plesske, and Rostek 2018, 117). The latter, i.e. conceptualising literary-economic thinking at a metalevel, is at an advanced stage. A growing number of publications are seeking to professionalise a literary perspective on economic issues and theories (e.g. Grünkemeier, Plesske, and Rostek 2018; Seybold and Chihara 2019a), or, in turn, contour an economic perspective on literature (e.g. Akdere and Baron 2018). This includes more tailored overviews that

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1 With this timeline and approach, I follow Grünkemeier, Plesske, and Rostek, who situate the beginnings of Economic Criticism with nineteenth-century writers such as John Ruskin and Karl Marx and position not only New Economic Criticism but also Marxist criticism as possible subsets of an in fact much more diverse discourse that is best subsumed under the label of 'Economic Criticism;' for more information, see their article "The Value of Economic Criticism Reconsidered: Approaching Literature and Culture through the Lens of Economics" (2018). In addition, this represents the conceptual foundation of the new network "Methodologies of Economic Criticism" (January 2021-), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and coordinated by the three authors.

investigate, for example, overlaps between postcolonial literatures and theories (e.g. Brouillette 2011; 2014; Dirlik 1998; Huggan 2001; Kennedy 2017; Koegler 2018; Pollard, McEwan, and Hughes 2011; Zein-Elabdin 2011; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004), eighteenth-century literatures (e.g. Mueller 2020; Rostek 2021; Roxburgh 2016; Roxburgh and Auguscik 2016), or nineteenth-century literatures (e.g. Morson and Schapiro 2017; Rostek 2018) with economic themes or processes. These publications build on interdisciplinary knowledge and/or collaboration to uneven degrees; for example, those contributing to edited collections often remain homogeneously anchored in one field, as is the case with Seybold and Chihara's *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Economics* (2019a), all of whose contributors work in literature departments. Somewhat counter to the commonly positive views of interdisciplinarity in the academy, at this particular disciplinary juncture, shared projects involving members of different disciplines remain a rarity.

While interdisciplinary collaboration under the banner of literary-economic scholarship is yet tentative, leaving some hints of uncertainty around the foundations of Economic Criticism, the relationship between literary and cultural studies scholars and another prominent discipline whose *métier* is economy – business studies – remains still more obscure. The differentiation between economics and business studies or business schools (also occasionally: business administration, School of Management)<sup>2</sup> is important, as the corresponding university departments or chairs are often institutionally distinct, even though there are cross-overs, of course, at the level of ideas, and collaborative work both in scholarship and practice. For example, micro- and macroeconomic research is important for more long-term oriented, strategic management projections with which companies seek to tailor their activities to likely market developments and shifting complexity. Literary studies scholars, often affiliated with American studies or postcolonial studies, are increasingly addressing business themes such as the corporation (Mueller 2020), finance (e.g. Crosthwaite 2019; La Berge 2015; Marsh 2007; 2020; Shaw 2015; Shonkwiler 2017), financialisation (e.g. Kloeckner and Mueller 2018b) and management (e.g. Brouillette 2013; Dorson and Verlinden 2019a).<sup>3</sup> They have drawn on organisation studies and its so-called 'literary turn' (Glaubitz 2016) or forayed into marketing and branding scholarship (e.g. Brouillette 2014; Koegler 2018). These research efforts are again founded on varying degrees of interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge pools, occasionally building bridges to decidedly interdisciplinary research organisations, in particular "Finance and

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2 Business schools typically include research related to accounting, administration, analytics, economics, entrepreneurship, finance, international business, logistics, management (e.g. cross-cultural management, human resource management, management information systems, management science, strategic management, critical management), marketing, organisation, public relations, and research methods, among others. 'School of Management' and 'School of Business Administration' are other institutional labels under which, broadly, business-centred scholarship is situated at university level.

3 See also the network "Model Aesthetics: Between Literary and Economic Knowledge" (James Dorson; funded by the German Research Foundation).

Society"<sup>4</sup> (e.g. Kloeckner and Mueller 2018a) or "International Critical Management Studies"<sup>5</sup> (Koegler 2018). While Marxist critique has tackled the power of corporations and finance for some time now (scholars like Fredric Jameson or Arif Dirlik ranking amongst the most prominent), this more recent scholarship is marked by a greater inclination toward conceptual cross-fertilisation between, broadly, business on the one hand and literature, on the other.

Given the burgeoning quality of literary scholars' interest in business topics, it is hardly surprising that these scholars have only just begun to put on the map business studies and its diverse subfields for research inspiration and collaboration or, in even fewer cases, have actively sought out collaboration with scholars from business or management schools. Further, it is unsurprising that their research pursuits are still commonly and somewhat vaguely situated under the broader heading of 'Economic Criticism,' still awaiting, perhaps, their 'proper' placing in the (inter-)disciplinary imagination. Indeed, how this literary scholarship might eventually develop in relation to Economic Criticism and whether its forays into the realm of business will eventually be associated with a separate research label – and 'Literary Business Studies' might be such a label – is yet unclear. The exact relationship between literary and cultural studies, Economic Criticism, and business studies remains to be more fully contoured.

This article seeks to contribute to further clarifying the productive and at times uneasy relations between these disciplines and fields, through a conjoint discourse on interdisciplinarity and critique. This includes foregrounding the diverse potentials of interdisciplinarity, such as for conceptual networking, for diversifying images of disciplinary 'selves' and 'others' (something of great urgency in the literary-economic/literary-business domain), and for emphasising the proper roots of academic work in personal collaboration. I also discuss interactions and frictions between interdisciplinarity and the symbolic economy that is academia (both, again, crucial where economy-related literary criticism is concerned). In the following sections, I will first situate literary-economic/literary-business pursuits within a broader debate on interdisciplinarity, networks, historicity, and valuation ("II. Networking Interdisciplinarity"). I will then move on to diversify meta-discursive notions of scholarly 'complicity' with the market and/or capitalism by staking out analogies to meta-disciplinary debates in Law and Literature, thus also bringing recent positions on 'critique' (e.g. Anker; Felski; Meyler; Sedgwick 2003) to bear on the discussion ("III. Complicity, Critique, Form"), before using the last section to conjoin interdisciplinarity and critique with collaboration and intersectionality, and hence with care for the potential ethico-political fallouts of academic research ("IV. Collaboration and Critique as Care").

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4 See the organisation's website, <<http://financeandsociety.ed.ac.uk/>> [accessed 27 September 2021].

5 See the organisation's website: <<https://internationalcms.org/>> [accessed 27 September 2021].

## 2. Networking Interdisciplinarity

In elaborating on interdisciplinarity as it pertains to literature and economy/business, and also investigating ways in which interdisciplinary practice is framed by a larger symbolic economy, my argument is informed, amongst other sources, by some of the tenets of book studies and also my own previous work on the 'performative market' (Koepler 2018; 2020a). Book studies or book studies-influenced work has continually produced awareness of the book as interlinked in larger socio-economic processes of production, trade, and reception, rendering overt its commodity status (e.g. Brouillette 2011; Huggan 2001; 2020; Murray 2018; Lanzendörfer 2021; Lanzendörfer and Norrick-Rühl 2020a; Squires 2007; Thompson 2012). This is encapsulated, for example, in Tim Lanzendörfer and Corinna Norrick-Rühl's approach in *The Novel as Network*: "The novel is a literary form and a physical commodity, a means of claiming cultural prestige and a point of reference, a source of styles and a receptacle for new technologies," in short: a "network of connections" (2020b, 3). In the same volume, Claire Squires similarly suggests that the novel is

an aesthetic and commercial good with values derived from a variety of taste and value regimes, stemming from professional networks, and which are constructed by various hierarchies (including the structural and systemic), alongside their own intrinsic, crafted, and aesthetic qualities. (2020, 252)

In both these understandings, the 'novel as network' combines aspects and caters to understandings of value that are commonly disciplinarily disentangled from one another; indeed, the commercial aspect is habitually disavowed particularly in literary studies, even where literature is readily perceived as a powerful means of public participation. Most commonly, awareness of literature's commercial underpinnings is treated as negligible or, indeed, as diametrically opposed to its (and literary critics') progressive impacts and goals. This signals the extent of cognitive dissonance that is created by simultaneously considering literature as a commercial good (one that is entangled in a whole system of sourcing, producing, marketing, and trading) and as incorporating unique ethico-political qualities ("books are different") that are actively protected in many countries (or so goes the argument) by favourable taxing and pricing regulations and/or national book funds.<sup>6</sup> In persuasively conveying the existence of a 'novel network,' i.e. in positioning the novel as the very epicentre of perspectives that are commonly disjointed by disciplinary compartmentalisation, *The Novel as Network* exemplifies the usefulness of a book studies' perspective on literature and how it may serve as a connector between disparate disciplines and viewpoints, opening up new ways of practicing and imagining literary studies in relation to business.

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6 "Books are different" is the well-known 1962 precedent at the Restrictive Practices Court of the United Kingdom. Even now, well after the demise of the UK Net Book Agreement in 1997, it is still a popular sentiment informing state funds and national policies worldwide seeking to promote national literatures and/or protect national book industries (e.g. reduced or zero VAT, the Canada Book Fund, the German *Buchpreisbindung*, etc.).

The network perspective outlined here enables a re-imagining of 'literature' both in relation to the economic and to disciplinarity, and the proliferation of this connection/imagination extends historically. As I write elsewhere, the rise of the novel not only coincided with the increasing popularity of imagining the nation as an imagined community (à la Benedict Anderson's classic definition<sup>7</sup>), but also with the transformation of markets from concrete physical spaces with concrete practitioners ('marketplace') into more abstract spheres that would eventually accumulate into imagining entire national economies as competing in a global market. This gradual process of imaginative layering and accumulation indicates a tripartite dynamic between novel, nation, and market as driving a development that ultimately facilitated "imagining both nations and national economies as communities" (Koegler 2018, 59). Indeed, there is a case to be made that the way in which we imagine literatures and academia today is closely tied to these conjoint economic and epistemological processes that received such a boost via the rapidly increasing commercialisation of the literary market in the eighteenth century. This is a century over the course of which the novel arose as an increasingly widely, transatlantically traded good. Its thematic investment, too, in colonial, transatlantic plots of personal and/or emotional enrichment (e.g. via the sentimental novel) suggests a level of accelerated literary-economic cross-fertilisation that would enable communal imaginaries ('us' and 'them') in new ways and based on new premises. The same imaginaries were driven by the unfolding proliferation and compartmentalisation of knowledge into different disciplines, a process entangled with colonial expansion (e.g. anthropology, biology, geography, etc.) and the normalisation of white supremacy such as in the context of the plantation economy (e.g. through scientific empiricism and biological racism). As such, and as Anshuman Prasad, Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, and Jean Helms Mills remind us in their introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies* (2016b, 6-7), the current, highly compartmentalised knowledge system to large degrees is a colonial heritage. While the ideological foundations of academic disciplines have shifted (though not entirely, as continuing efforts of 'decolonising' the academy indicate), the disciplinarily compartmentalised, colonial system with its epistemology of interiority versus exteriority remains.

As the link to colonialism and colonial discourse already indicates, if both the novel and academic disciplinarity can be understood as historically grown and intersecting formations with specific, though shifting, epistemological foundations and ties to the economic, then these formations have been influenced by shifting regimes of valuation in "the symbolic economy of discourse" (Koegler 2018, 3). Conventional valuation invests ideas, perspectives, people, communities, disciplines, and so forth, with transubstantiable forms of different capitals, and unevenly so. It thereby generates different degrees of visibility and entitlement in relation to different ideas, ideals,

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7 I am referring particularly to Anderson's suggestions that "[i]n fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" and "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006 [1983], 6).

individuals, groups, etc. This also applies in the context of community imaginaries (including interdisciplinary ones) and connections (including interdisciplinary ones) which only become visible and proliferate in discursive-performative arenas because they *are* valorised; because they *are* invested with different kinds of capital, branded and marketed by discourse participants who either actively want to see them thrive or are structured by performativities that enforce such investments by default. Understood in this way, scholarship represents a conjoint production of knowledge and valuation, i.e. is intimately bound up with 'brand acts' (Koehler 2018) that produce the kinds of proliferations and symbolic capital accumulations that drive research traditions and research dissemination. Similarly, meta-discursively considered, interdisciplinarity is a network space, one in which scholarly work on shared themes of research blends in with questions not only of imagination (where can disciplinary boundaries plausibly be placed?) or practicality (where are methodologies and/or aims sufficiently relatable so as to smoothly enable interdisciplinary work within the allotted time?), but also valuation: which forms of interdisciplinarity are worth pursuing, i.e. can be valorised in relation to interests such as in innovation, ethics, politics, and/or increasing (monetary, cultural, or symbolic) capital? No doubt, particularly in a field that has often adamantly defended the ethico-political value and quality of its main research object – literature – these kinds of questions can significantly shape scholars' openness toward interdisciplinarity. Regimes of valuation can create research landscapes that exhibit very uneven degrees of interdisciplinary engagement and connection, leaving interdisciplinarity in some areas distinctly underexplored even where scholars pronounce an interest in the topics of another discipline. Some disciplinary boundaries remain more fiercely in place than others.

In the process of further specifying the relationship between literary and cultural studies and economy-related fields of research – particularly business studies and its diverse subfields – a common issue lies in the limited awareness as to what these fields actually are or do (problem of imagination). Often, it is assumed, for example, that 'business' research in the academy is a disciplinary and/or ideological monolith that brings forth more or less (ideologically) homogeneous, quantitative perspectives, and yet its scholarship ranges, as that of most internationally pursued fields, from orthodox to heterodox and quantitative to qualitative research, including such that ventures into decidedly interdisciplinary terrain. Theories and authors that literary and cultural studies scholars would readily identify as belonging to their own 'turf' have also been absorbed into the heterodox strands of business studies, some of them for decades, to carve out innovative positions, for example Homi K. Bhabha, Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Karl Marx, Edward Said, Gayatri C. Spivak, to name only a select few. Shared research interests between literary and cultural studies scholars and business scholars include aesthetics, agency, community, complexity, culture, diversity, feminism, narrative, postcolonialism, symbolism, and urbanism, particularly in such subfields as arts of management, critical management studies, critical marketing studies, cross-cultural management and diversity management, or organisation studies which have proliferated in the last 20 to 30 years, some since the 1960s (e.g. organisation studies and diversity management). A case in

point, Prasad et al.'s introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies* (2016b) begins with epigraphs from Walter D. Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000), Arundhati Roy's "Confronting Empire" (2003), and Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991) (2016b, 3). Launching the collection in this way is no exception. Bringing forth strings of Oxford Handbooks, Companions, or Series (e.g. the Routledge Series in Critical Marketing), and regularly hosting large international, interdisciplinary conferences such as the "Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism" (SCOS; to date 25 yearly conferences),<sup>8</sup> "International Critical Management Studies" (ICMS; 12<sup>th</sup> conference), or "Arts of Management" (five conferences to date),<sup>9</sup> these subfields of, broadly, business studies can seem like a parallel though largely disavowed universe of scholarly debate, parts of which would be eminently suitable for sustained and mutually inspiring, interdisciplinary collaboration with literary and cultural scholars, and under its own banner (in analogy to 'Economic Criticism').

Glimpsing such a possibility, Paul Crosthwaite, Peter Knight, and Nicky Marsh have recently suggested the term "Economic Humanities" as a moniker to denote "a broadened methodological scope made possible by greater interaction with various economically oriented branches of the social sciences" (2019, 662). They envisage "literary studies scholars and historians [...], as well as economic sociologists and economic anthropologists" (2019, 664) as suitable diversifiers of the New Economic Criticism paradigm, though this appears to have its pitfalls: "To be taken seriously by those within economics, finance, and business studies," write the authors, "the Economic Humanities will need to become intimately familiar with research in those disciplines, which is a daunting task" (2019, 664); yet this familiarisation is necessary to "remedy the technocratic 'tunnel vision' besetting both financial professionals and academic economists" (2019, 665). I would suggest that a more nuanced conceptualisation of the disciplines might be needed to diversify and professionalise literary-economic engagement and potentially a more dialogical approach. This would require, however, acknowledgement of business disciplines as already heterogeneous discourses, some of which have so long yielded heterodox perspectives that, as James Dorson and Jasper J. Verlinden have aptly put it, the question is whether "the humanities today can offer a perspective on management that has not already been incorporated into the curricula of business schools" (2019b, 17). Why not take a closer look at this non-monolithic scholarship to diversify meta-discursive imagination (whose 'tunnel vision'?) and to create a framework of interdisciplinarity that is already tailored to specific approaches or research topics? While it can seem that literary and cultural studies are 'late to the party,' it might not be too late to generate collaborative projects to which subdisciplines from both sides could not only contribute but from which they could also, undoubtedly, profit.

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8 See the organisation's website: <<https://www.scos.org>> [accessed 27 September 2021].

9 See the organisation's website: <<https://www.artsofmanagement.com>> [accessed 27 September 2021].

As the following section will continue to argue, homogenising perceptions along the lines of 'self' and 'other' continue to be a central difficulty at this particular disciplinary juncture, which is surprising considering literary and cultural studies scholars' general investment in deconstructing such binaries (see also Koegler 2020a). Additional inspiration can come from book studies, into which mainstream business knowledge, particularly from marketing and branding, has long been incorporated, the development of the publishing industry having constituted a central area of concern (e.g. Childress 2017; Phillips and Bhaskar 2019; Squires 2007; Stevenson 2010; Striphas 2009). This includes, most recently, the accelerating digitisation of the book market which holds various new potentials as well as constraints for authors, readers, publishers, agents, and so forth, some of them transforming the very core of literature – authorship and reading – and how they relate to the market (e.g. Murray 2018; Norrick-Rühl 2020; Skains 2019). As this suggests, professionalising and diversifying the literary-economic perspective very much depends on rethinking the very networks of knowledge utilised in constructing and envisaging literature and literary interdisciplinarity. This possibly involves not only a re-imagining but also a revalorising of business studies, so as to increase the visibility of its heterodox subfields in literary and cultural studies and to attain a more nuanced foundation from which to accelerate the interdisciplinary project.

### 3. Complicity, Critique, Form

In their chapter "Managing Postcolonialism," a contribution to a collection entitled *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*, literary scholar Mrinalini Greedharry and Pasi Ahonen, a management scholar, use the following words to reflect on the conundrum of interdisciplinary inquiry involving both their fields:

it bears emphasizing again 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. We emphasize this because our experience presenting these arguments to various audiences in the humanities suggests that humanities scholars persistently understand any discussion of management and organization as inevitably aligned with the neo-liberal discourse that informs the structural changes many of us experience on a daily basis in our institutional work lives. (2016, 59)<sup>10</sup>

As Greedharry and Ahonen's defensive statement here signals, it is their experience that scholarly interactions between literary studies and business are easily perceived as treacherous and/or ideologically unfit for the humanities, including the baseless claim that such interdisciplinary engagement accelerates the neoliberalisation of the university sector.

Whether or not Greedharry and Ahonen's experience of suspicion and backlash against their interdisciplinary scholarship can be generalised, there is broad evidence that literary critics in particular feel the need to safeguard against potential backlash –

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10 I have quoted and briefly discussed this elsewhere (Koegler 2020a, 50-51).

i.e. against a kind of critique of which they themselves, uncannily, might become the victims. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, postcolonial scholars engaging with themes such as marketing and branding habitually frame their analyses by admitting "complicity" in the market. They do so self-ironically, at times sarcastically, which signals the latent unease to be in such a position (e.g. Brouillette 2011; Huggan 2001; 2020; Ponzanesi 2014; see Koezler 2018 and 2020a for details). This is a phenomenon that can also be observed amongst other literary scholars who broach the theme of economics. For example, in their introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Economics* (2019), Matt Seybold and Michelle Chihara ask, given that they invest "so many hours" in "capitalist apologia:" "Are we complicit, just as economists are, in rationalising and normalising an unsound and exploitative ideology?" (2019b, 3). Two pages later, they observe, similarly to Greedharry and Ahonen:

The brush that tars both the critic and her topic is commonly wielded at literary critics who write about finance and economics. The argument is that in their commitment to its *seductive* formal complexity, they reproduce the ideology of the objects of their critique. (2019b, 5; my emphasis)

Of course, Seybold and Chihara can be read here as deploying irony, too, and yet what is striking is that they seem to pair such irony with eroticism ("seductive"). In a similar context, Sandra Ponzanesi has used the words "deceit and seduction" and "devilish pact" (2014, 46) to endorse Graham Huggan's ironic admission of his own complicity in *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001). What is evoked in these descriptions is a biblical image of temptation, one in which interest in, broadly, economy is conveyed as the forbidden fruit of knowledge. They also resonate with biblical scepticism toward commercialism, as in the image of Jesus furiously banning the moneylenders from the temples. What we are dealing with, then, is a potentially very old fear of being 'tainted' (or: 'tarred,' to use Seybold and Chihara's quaint formulation) by the seductive-infectious powers of the coin, potentially triggering an ominous fall from Eden or, indeed, a ban from the supposedly pristine temples of literary studies, hence these performances of pre-emptive self-chastisement.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in his recent *The Market Logics of Contemporary Fiction*, Crosthwaite situates the "coexistence of hatred and love [which] correspondingly *intensifies* the libidinal relation to the object" as part and parcel of his scholarly endeavour, before locating his position at the "vexed juncture of disavowal and attraction" (2019, 17; original emphasis). In sum, it makes sense to reiterate Seybold and Chihara's own understanding, influenced by Elizabeth Hewitt's "The Vexed Story of Economic Criticism" (2009), that "[o]f all the interdisciplinary *couplings*, perhaps the *marriage* between literary studies and economics has been the most tempestuous – the most likely to alternate between *devotion* and *repudiation* [...]"

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11 There is still more to this, of course, such as Bourdieu's suggestion that the literary field reiterates the expulsion of the economic so as to endorse its independence or notions of 'critical distance' promoted by the Frankfurt School, both of which have in fact been reproduced in ironic projections of complicity, such as in Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic*. These strands of 'thinking apart' literature/literary studies from the economy or the market are part and parcel of the longer history here provisionally sketched.

(Hewitt 618, qtd. in Seybold and Chihara 2019b, 2; my emphases). As in the previous quotations, the ambivalent language of sexual transgression and repulsion is pervasive here.

Indicating a strong, at times fetishistic investment in the notion of scholarly 'deviance' and its titillating effects, these self-positionings on the introductory pages of a range of highly relevant, much-acclaimed studies clearly serve to self-guard against criticism – or, more precisely, critique –, and Marxist critique in particular. Here it is fitting, of course, that Marx's own depiction of a 'vampiric' capitalism in his *Capital* trilogy already and strongly resonates with the image of a seductive devil, as per nineteenth-century imaginations of the vampire as a sexualised-seductive penetrator of half-willing, half-tormented bodies. As such, what admission of 'complicity' also achieves is an appropriation of the mark of deviance apparently attached to literary scholars' uncanny 'mixings' with the economy/capitalism/neo-liberalism/business. Irony and sarcasm are additionally brought to the scene so as to try and 'manage' potential fallouts, and yet, the strong imagery evoked in the examples no doubt risks perpetuating the frictions they identify in literary-economic research endeavours, indeed risks rendering these frictions pleasurable and gratifying.<sup>12</sup>

In seeking to reach beyond such vexed yet routine self-explanations, it is helpful to look at another interdiscipline, Law and Literature, that has struggled with related issues (though in less explicitly sexualised terms).<sup>13</sup> "Especially in its early guises," write Elizabeth S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler in their introduction to *New Directions in Law and Literature*, "the interdiscipline was seen as humanizing law, returning overly utilitarian or legal realist modes of legal study to their humanistic, ethically minded origins" (2017, 1-2), and: "law and literature scholarship has often glorified narrative and storytelling as inherently ethical or salvific, failing to attend sufficiently to the potentially distortive effects of narrative within law" (2017, 12). Harking back also to what Guyora Binder and Robert Weisberg observe to be the formative duality of "sentimentalism and scepticism" in these imaginations, the authors distil how literature has been linked to "inherently ennobling effects" and how law has been characterised as "inherently biased and corrupt," with "its negative limits [...] seen to overshadow its virtues and accomplishments" (Anker and Meyler 2017, 12-13). This foundational duality is even more poignantly revealed when considering that the very interdiscipline of Law and Literature itself arose in law schools as a counter-movement to another subfield – law and economics – and its perceived fixation on "market forces" (Stierstorfer 2017, 11). Clearly, there are certain parallels in these positionings to the previously presented scholarly framings of literature in relation to business. What is traded on here, too, is the view that literature is a pristine, moral refiner of the 'Other' discipline, be that of law as such or of another law-affiliated interdiscipline whose connections with 'market forces' via economics represent an escalated danger of moral

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12 A full account of the metaphoricality employed – its biblical connotations and blendings with notions of perverse and/or repressed attraction (language of 'seduction'), perhaps even figuring literary-economic interpenetrations as miscegenation, remains to be written.

13 For a more detailed discussion of this field, see Gruss in this special issue.

sell-out. Anker and Meyler (2017, 12-13) see such binary depictions as symptomatic of the normalisation of performative paranoia in literary studies, its "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Sedgwick 2003, 124) and investment in "critique" (Felski 2015). In other words, the authors interlink their meta-discursive, interdisciplinary observations with what they consider is a growing sentiment in literary studies, i.e. that the long-lasting focus on 'critique' (whose aim it is, precisely, to comb through texts in order to expose their *complicity*) is losing its grip on changing socio-cultural conditions. Critique is blamed for prioritising 'dismantling' over 'assemblage,' particularly via its suspicion of 'facts,' something that has even been co-opted by the political right (as in the Trumpist term 'fake news,' of course).

Following Anker and Meyler, it becomes possible to understand defensive titillating performances of complicity as symptomatic of the pervasiveness of critique, indeed of *internalised* critique. Gestures of pre-emptive self-debunking in economy-ophile literary scholarship reinforce binary forms of thinking – such as 'purity' vs. 'corruption,' 'false consciousness' vs. 'right consciousness' – and in this vein maintain structures that many of the arguments at least partially reach beyond. These are limiting forms of containment; the potential virtuosity of a proliferating, creative-intellectual network – one that might in fact reach beyond disciplinary boundaries – grinds to a halt. As this language already suggests ('form;' 'network;' 'contain'), not only can these relations and the impact of internalised critique be captured by Caroline Levine's thinking on form, but Levine's terminology and concepts can also be utilised to dilute, as suggested by Anker and Meyler, the binarisms that continue to artificially restrict disciplinary and interdisciplinary imaginaries in relation to economics and business. Levine emphasises the dynamism of forms, writing that "when forms meet, their collision produces unexpected consequences, results that cannot always be traced back to deliberate intentions or dominant ideologies" (2015, 8). Influenced by Levine, Anker and Meyler come to a position where "the lives of literature as well as those of law [...] cannot possibly be comprehensively summed up in a single dyadic or triadic scheme" (2017, 16); instead, they "depend on the capacity to be responsive: to move, to bend, to accommodate, to perceive, to react" (2017, 16). As my discussions here have shown, the same spirit is crucial for an interdisciplinarity that involves literary and cultural studies and strands of economics or business studies. Moving away from binary understandings of complicity – a concept that is itself symptomatic of totalising, binaristic meaning-making – and instead approaching economic and business-related knowledge with more openness and nuance, means "to adopt new tools; to move from a spirit of debunking to one of assembling, or from critique to composition" (Anker and Felski paraphrasing Latour,<sup>14</sup> 2017, 15). Of course, this contains risks, such as seeing the limits of anti-economic or anti-business identity narratives and glimpsing the shaky foundations of the cosy nest that literary scholars have again and again built upon the notion of literary singularity. However, given the vast range of shared research interests (aesthetics, agency, community, etc., as listed above), why not see what business scholarship on, for example, organisations and identity, organisational storytelling, diversity in work contexts, or theories of globalisation, complexity, and space might

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14 They refer to Latour (2004) and (2010).

add to literary and cultural studies approaches, as the former have opened up perspectives and contexts that have not only long been left to one side in literary and cultural studies but also constitute real-life realities for so many people, including literary and cultural scholars. So many of us work in organisations and/or businesses large and small, ranging from all shades of non-profit to for-profit, both monetary and symbolic. Positioned in different places in hierarchies and networks, contained by shifting wholes and intersecting rhythms (to use Levine's terminology once more), inside as well as outside the academy, we are driven by a dynamic diversity of motivations and aims, sometimes blurring into each other, and ranging from self-aggrandisement to idealism or utopianism – none of which can be contained within binary forms. And yet, as I will continue to argue in the closing section of this article, critique does have a role to play in the dynamics of interdisciplinary collaboration.

#### 4. Collaboration and Critique as Care

In *Economics and Literature: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach*, Çınla Akdere, Christine Baron, and Bruna Ingraio use their introduction to emphasise that their contributors, variously from "economics, history of economic thought and literary studies" (2018, 7), "are conscious of the difficulties of building a common discourse of shared knowledge" (2018, 9). I am interested in the formulation "building a common discourse of shared knowledge." This very much resonates with the prioritisation of building and assembling over deconstruction, as advocated by Anker, Meyler, and Felski. Clearly, it is one of the merits of interdisciplinary collaboration that it per se necessitates, to reuse Latour's words, the building of shared knowledges and shared methodologies rather than engaging in a mutual debunking and taking down. As Robert Frodeman similarly suggests in his introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, interdisciplinarity means "not only the study of how to integrate various kinds of disciplinary knowledge – call this the epistemic task – but just as much the analysis of the challenges surrounding effective communication to different audiences – call this the political and rhetorical element" (2017, 4). No doubt, what Frodeman envisages poses many reciprocal challenges, but they are useful challenges insofar as they are aimed at finding common ground, at solving conflicts or clashes, and turning them into creative, intellectual opportunities rather than dead ends. In addition, and in harking back to section 2, interdisciplinarity can also counter the colonial heritage of Western knowledge, which "eradicates the world's thriving heterogeneity of knowledge systems" (Prasad et al. 2016b, 6); this is because interdisciplinary cooperation offers, to an extent, the opportunity of epistemologically diversifying a compartmentalised knowledge system, upping flexibility and, potentially, also generating affiliations with heterodox knowledges. (To wit, Prasad et al. situate critical management studies as a discipline of "plural knowledges," exactly seeking to counter colonial compartmentalisation; 2016b, 7.) As a result, interdisciplinary collaboration not only encourages a re-imagining of other disciplines formerly cast as homogeneous 'Others;' not only does it reduce the prowess of

internalised critique and binary thinking, but it also ideally instigates a reconfiguration of the very epistemological networks that underlie and facilitate both disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge formations.

Within these explorative workings of disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration, however, critique remains a central instigator of self-reflection and diversification. Ideally, critique functions as a cautioning mechanism that creates a sustained awareness of where researchers, as individuals or in collaboration, risk (re)producing exclusion and disenfranchisement, and how this might be avoided. Rather than dismissing critique off-hand, therefore, the question might be: how can critique, where flawed, be reassembled and adjusted to safeguard against the kind of thinking that, in the literary-economic scholarly interstices, has perpetuated friction rather than amplification of interdisciplinary inquiry? What are the merits of critique and where do they manifest themselves? I am inspired here by Mayanthi Fernando's article "Critique as Care," in which she positions herself "against a distinction between critique and care," i.e. against the pessimistic as much as trivialising assumption (also put forth by Latour 2004; 2010) that "critique entails denunciation, destruction, and the foreclosure of livable futures" (2019, 14). 'Denunciation' and so forth, whether of critique itself or 'economy' and its connotations, surely is unproductive, even destructive. As signalled by Fernando's usage of the word "care," critique can be used to different effects where it does not dispense with connectedness and responsibility, i.e. where it continues to build on notions of reciprocity and ex/change. Collaborative interdisciplinary research is one scenario that can foster such connectedness, thriving, as it does, on exchange between actual people from different fields. In the context of literature and economics and/or business studies, such collaboration can ultimately counteract the limiting effects of complicity, as it breaks down the walls of suspicion that literary critics have themselves erected around economy-related scholarship (and particularly its orthodox strands).

Broadly following a path built on critique, the contributions that follow Prasad et al.'s introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies* take on heterodox positions in relation to their own, already-heterodox subdiscipline, such as from the vantage points of feminist critique (Karen Lee Ashcraft, chapter 6), decolonial critique (Janet L. Borgerson, chapter 7), queer critique (Jeff Hearn, Charlotte Holgersson, and Marjut Jyrkinen, chapter 8), and so forth. For example, Karen Lee Ashcraft, in her insightful chapter on feminism and critical management studies, laments how the field "claims feminism and keeps her in her 'rightful' place" (2016, 98). She criticises that the relevance of feminism is frequently professed in meta-discursive, canonising formats, however engagement can remain at a nominal level, i.e. is not necessarily followed up by more extensive analyses of gender discrimination in specific contexts, such as in organisations (academic or otherwise). Accordingly, it is little surprise that someone's personal experience of being a female scholar in critical management would crystallise as described by Ashcraft:

I learned I am not alone (a) when I notice the many venues that still feature only white male experts, (b) when I am asked to recommend 'good women' worthy of such venues, (c) when I am charged to represent the 'special interest' of gender, (d) when I see brown

women predictably tasked with serving up intersectional or postcolonial feminism, (e) when I heed the particular sort of masculine ethos that tends to script intellectual exchange and (f) when I squirm at the sexualized, (hetero)sexist banter that suffuses much social exchange, even as I liberally partake in it. (2016, 95)

Of course, these are familiar scenes – scenes as they might take place in any discipline, not only with regard to gendered but also, for example, racial, sexual, or cultural, difference. This suggests that intersectionality can be brought to bear on the network formation that is interdisciplinarity: to denote how experience or observation of normalised marginalisation is shared across different disciplines; to underscore that exchanging views regarding these intersecting forms of marginalisation can be a powerful starting point from where to explore potential themes of shared research. No doubt, critique increases awareness of these structures, and this awareness is crucial, in turn, for limiting the potentially harmful effects of scholarship that range from representational, political, or legal disenfranchisement to negative impacts on health (e.g. if medical trials do not test for effectiveness or risks across different genders, ethnic backgrounds, and so forth). Interdisciplinarity that combines collaboration, and, as such, assemblage and care with critique – i.e. turns critique into a self-reflexive, cautioning, and diversifying mechanism, practice, or form – is possibly one of the best places from which to generate new forms of both imaginative and valorisable research. Such research, in the literary-economic interdiscipline and beyond, might be specific, yet flexible enough to know well its own limits – limits rooted, for example, in individual researchers' outlooks and positionalities, intentions, and sentiments, including those of unease.

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