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“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall”: Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity

Abstract I: Quando una studiosa di teoria della letteratura e un medico collaborano per studiare l’opera, molti confini disciplinari devono essere negoziati. Guardando sia l’esperienza personale che la letteratura scientifica, questo articolo indaga il processo di tale collaborazione interdisciplinare ed esplora i suoi vantaggi e i suoi rischi.

Abstract II: When a literary theorist and a physician collaborate to research and write about opera, many disciplinary boundaries have to be negotiated. Looking at both personal experience and the scholarly literature, this article investigates the process of such interdisciplinary collaboration and explores its advantages as well as its dangers.

Keywords: interdisciplinarity, collaboration, opera, disciplinary cultures.

Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall” (1914) begins with lines that seem appropriate for thinking about the boundaries/walls – or lack thereof – between disciplines in academia:

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

Those gaps between which “even two [or more of us] can pass abreast” that are caused by that “something [...] that doesn’t love a wall” is our subject, and our approach is going to be personal, since our research together has spilled boulders and made gaps.

We had best start with full disclosure: we have been together since high school. Growing up in the same Toronto suburb, we therefore had basically the same primary and secondary education and, thus, the same initial intellectual ‘formation’. It is true that our family backgrounds were sufficiently different for ours to be considered at that time, in 1970, a ‘mixed’ marriage: an Italian-Canadian named Bortolotti marrying an Irish/Scottish/English-Canadian named Hutcheon. Nonetheless our educational – and intellectual – backgrounds up to this point were remarkably similar.

That all changed when we went to university. Linda studied languages and literatures; Michael went into medicine. She then went to graduate school in Comparative Literature,

and he did post-grad work in respiratory physiology. What we realised only later was that we were being socialised into different cultures when we entered our different fields. Graduate school instils a disciplinary culture: it instructs us in how we should behave – that is, what professional norms we should conform to, what methods of inquiry and analysis are acceptable, what language to use to carry out that inquiry and analysis, or, more generally, what the disciplinary norms are for interaction, scholarly production, and even success. ‘Everything’, from the courses we took to the conferences we attended, from our experiences with peer review to the academic reward system, reinforced and reproduced our different disciplinary cultures. Since our fields were both university academic ones, there was some overlap, obviously. But there was also sufficient difference that if you read publications by each of us from this time on, you would immediately see that we ‘spoke’ and wrote in different vernaculars.

Flash-forward 10 years; each of us had been working in our professions, teaching and researching in the different fields of Respiratory Medicine and Comparative Literature. We decided it would be interesting to try to write something together that would bring our different areas of expertise in what today we would call ‘interdisciplinary’ work. By this point, we had been married for 15 years and ‘thought’ we knew each other well; we ‘thought’ we had accepted that our different professions had turned out different ‘professional deformations’, as the French call it. Little did we know what we would discover.

We had both been attending the lively monthly meetings of a group called the Toronto Semiotic Circle in the 1970s and early 80s, and so we decided to attempt a semiotic analysis of pharmaceutical advertising that appeared in medical journals. We actually consciously began with the same methodological premises – those set out by Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* and so we began determining the ideological implications of the visual and verbal messages conveyed in these advertisements. What makes these advertisements different from regular commercial ones is that they are *not* directed to the eventual consumer of pharmaceuticals (that is, the patient), but rather to the intermediary, the physician who prescribes the medications.

Our disciplinary differences surfaced immediately. Like Roland Barthes, Linda thought we should simply pick out the most ‘interesting’ and ‘complex’ advertisements and focus on those. But Michael knew that our intended audience – his medical colleagues – had a very different notion of what constitutes ‘evidence’, and simply would not find that methodology or its results of any interest – or, more importantly, of any value. So, instead of studying a couple of interesting advertisements, we would need to study a defined sample: 162 advertisements in a specific set of journals over a two-month period (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 1987). Clearly there were disciplinary differences operative here: different assumptions about knowledge and its gathering. And we learned what Julie Thompson Klein calls the “burden of comprehension” (Klein 1990: 110) that is crucial to interdisciplinary studies: one has to know what audience (or audiences) one is trying to reach and then conceive and develop the research project in such a way that one can communicate with that audience – not only in terms of specialised language, but in terms of disciplinary assumptions.

That first pilot project in collaboration and interdisciplinarity taught us a few other

things that were less disciplinary than personal. But the personal is another dimension of collaborative work that cannot be emphasised too much and yet is often ignored. Disciplines can reinforce personality differences. We joke that we have learned that we possess, shared between us, one obsessive-compulsive personality. In what has turned out to be a productive division of labour, he “obsesses” and she “compulses” (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 1995: 14). Working together on the same topic for the first time in the library taught us this – and exposed our ‘professional deformations’ along the way. For example, Michael was trained to read (and remember) every line. So, when we were in the library, he worked slowly and methodically, with care and attention, recording each point made in the book he was reading, in sequential and logical order. On the other hand, given the broad-based research projects she tends to undertake, Linda was used to reading through large numbers of scholarly works and only then zeroing in on relevant material. Therefore, after a few hours, Michael had reached page 20 in his first book, taking careful detailed notes, and Linda had cleared a library shelf, and had taken weird notes that looked like hieroglyphics to him.

At this point we had to stop and talk together about our massive differences in things like pace of reading, note-taking techniques, and choice of data to record. Part of this is clearly personality, but part is also reinforced by our chosen disciplines. We also learned that we thought as well as worked differently, though. Michael was trained, necessarily, as what he calls a ‘concrete thinker’. He not only had an obsessive’s urge to understand logic and sequence, but he also had what might be called a ‘diagnostic drive’, in which the plural meanings of an ambiguous set of physical signs had to be resolved into a single meaning (diagnosis). At the other extreme, as a textual critic operating within a postmodern frame of reference, Linda kept wanting to amplify the single into multiplicity, to jar the fixed into contingency.

What we learned was that we belonged to two different disciplinary ‘cultures’ – as defined by Stephanie and Jennifer Reich, a sociologist and a psychologist who are also siblings (Reich & Reich 2006). For the two of us, despite knowing each other well, despite knowing that our intellectual formations from graduate school on were different, we still had to face the fact that we worked, read, wrote, and even thought in very different disciplinary cultural contexts that determined everything from methods of analysis and theories to worldviews and language. These cultures determined how we thought and interacted, what we accepted as disciplinary priorities, values and norms, standards of evidence, and even measures of success. There were differences for us in what is viewed as knowledge and even in what sort of knowledge is possible. Given this, how did we manage to do collaborative interdisciplinary work together?

We will here artificially divide what is a unity for us – collaboration and interdisciplinarity – before bringing them together again in the personal. To consider ‘inter’ disciplinarity properly, we first have to consider ‘disciplinarity’ and its cultures. Every discipline obviously has its own intellectual history, its own experimental and analytic approaches, and its own theoretical contexts. Each produces a unique way of thinking about any given problem. This struck Linda forcefully when she first co-taught a graduate course on opera with a musicologist for a disciplinarily mixed group of drama, music and

literature students. The first time the two of them sat down together to look at the critical readings they had assigned for the first seminar, the musicologist asserted: “Well, given that the readings are about how ‘music’ is what makes opera unique as an art form, why don’t we start there?” Linda-the-literary responded with: “No, they are actually about how opera is unique in its bringing together of a ‘literary text’ and the music written specifically for it”. What they had done, they quickly realised, was place their different disciplinary ‘grids’ (so to speak) over the readings and, therefore, different things had been revealed – and concealed – by that grid. They were fascinated by this process, and decided to use it to teach their diverse student group about disciplinary thinking. When they went into the classroom, the students from the Drama Centre, who had yet another grid to place on the texts, came up with yet another reading of the readings: opera was actually unique because it was ‘live performed’ music and text. This was a constant learning process for them all.

Art forms like opera – that bring together music, literature, drama, and design – may require more than one discipline to analyse properly. The same is true in the sciences and social sciences: interdisciplinary research is often “driven by the need to address complex problems that cut across traditional disciplines”, and aided by “the capacity of new technologies to both transform existing disciplines and generate new ones” (Cohen Miller & Pate 2019: 1211). It is widely recognised today that there are often questions that cannot be answered by one discipline alone – questions like the fundamentals of the aging process or climate change, for example. The National Institutes of Health in the United States defines interdisciplinarity as the integrating of the analytical strengths of two or more disparate scientific disciplines to solve a given biological problem (Aboelela *et al.* 2007: 331)¹. But this can be expanded outside the biomedical field, obviously: in the behavioural, quantitative, engineering, and computer sciences, especially. But interdisciplinarity exists on a continuum of degrees of synthesis and integration, from ‘multi’ disciplinarity to ‘inter’ disciplinarity to ‘trans’ disciplinarity. The first (‘multi’) involves teams working in parallel or sequentially from their specific discipline base to address a common problem (as in the case of Linda’s course example). ‘Inter’ disciplinarity involves teams working jointly but still from a discipline-specific base on a given issue². And in ‘trans’ disciplinary work, teams use a shared conceptual framework, drawing together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address that common problem (Aboelela *et al.* 2007: 337-340). In this case, a research question can generate novel conceptual and methodological frameworks that, in fact, create a new discipline formed by the integration and collaboration of other specific disciplines: think of genomics or neuroscience.

Another way to think about interdisciplinarity, though, is that it takes place when two or more disciplines work together to open space between them; those interstices and those interfaces are where innovation often occurs. Crossing disciplinary boundaries has become almost a norm in the sciences and many of the social sciences, but also in some of the humanities – as any scholars who work in Medieval Studies or Women’s Studies or

¹ See also Berth Danermark (2019) for more on the significant and defining element of the ‘integration’ of knowledge in interdisciplinarity.

² For models of how this works, see Repko & Szostak (2017).

Cultural Studies know well. In an attempt to help granting agencies define – and evaluate – what constitutes interdisciplinarity, a study published in *Health Services Research* made an important distinction between the physical and social sciences (which were experimental, hypothesis-driven, and either positivist or post-positivist) and the humanities – whose mode of inquiry they presented as not hypothesis-driven, but rather as seeing reality as experientially based and historically shaped (Aboelela *et al.* 2007: 333).

Another major difference is that the solitary single author is still the norm in the humanities, but not in the sciences and social sciences. Thanks to the continuing ideological power of both Romanticism and capitalism, the autonomous individual is still seen in the humanities as the foundation of knowledge. By contrast, the growth of multi-authored papers in the scientific literature over the last decades has been the result of both the interdisciplinary nature of much research as well as the increased technological complexity of it. The scientific model of collaborative research has been called hierarchical in its clear authority patterns which appear in the authors list of a published article: the head of the lab generates the idea (and the grant money) and is the ‘last author’ in the list; the ‘first author’ may be a student or postgraduate fellow and will likely have done the experiment and actually written the paper; the others listed as coauthors will usually have contributed expertise in some specific area of the work (Trimbur & Braun 1992: 25). In other words, there is a stratified division of labour, both intellectual and technical; there is also a power structure, as we shall see.

While collaboration in the sciences is always hierarchical, it is not always interdisciplinary. If, for instance, a group of physicians and surgeons from the same specialty area (e.g. respiratory disease) collaborate, this is the realm of ‘mono’ disciplinarity; add a statistician to the project list and it becomes ‘multi’ disciplinarity: a plurality of disciplinary perspectives used in an instrumental way, but not in a synthetic manner. If, to use another example, two doctors and two nurses – using methodologies from, say, transplant research and from psychology and decision analysis – collaborate, we are in the realm of ‘inter’ disciplinarity. This also involves more than one discipline, but while they all maintain separate disciplinary bases for their contributions, they work together to formulate the problem, as well as the methodologies of evaluation and analysis. This is the model that granting agencies in North America appear to support and to which institutions there frequently pay lip service – for it makes great ‘intellectual’ sense. The problem is that academia – as a culture – has conflicting values. And disciplines, as institutionalised in ‘departments’, still rule supreme, and therefore disciplinary ‘policing’ is not rare: when feeling threatened, disciplines will assert ownership of intellectual turf. Many also argue that interdisciplinary work can risk appropriating or misusing or de-contextualising other disciplines, leading to scholarly dilettantism. Does this opposition create problems for scholars wanting to work across departmental and disciplinary borders? It most certainly does, as we shall show.

Having raised these institutional and disciplinary difficulties and resistances, readers might well ask: did we personally think about any of these when we started working together? Did we weigh the pros and cons seriously, when we – a ‘physician’ and a ‘literary critic’ – started working collaboratively on ‘opera’? To be perfectly honest: not really. We

simply wanted to work together again. We both love opera and it was, and is, a 'neutral turf' – it belongs to neither of us, in disciplinary terms. But why choose opera – aside from the fact that it has a 400-year-old history, rich in material to explore? To understand this, we offer a story about what we jokingly call our 'Moonstruck' moment (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 2001). Some readers may be old enough to recall the 1987 American movie called *Moonstruck*. The moment in the film that has become iconic for us is the one in which Loretta and Ronny (played by Cher and Nicholas Cage) descend the grand staircase at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and have a conversation about the death of the consumptive heroine, Mimì, in Puccini's opera, *La bohème*. This is Loretta's first trip to the opera, and she turns to Ronny and says: "I knew she was sick, but I didn't know she was going to die".

Our parallel scene takes place on that same staircase, a decade after this, when, following a production of Richard Wagner's opera *Parsifal*, Michael turned to Linda and said: "Do you think audiences today understand that the character in the opera named Amfortas had syphilis?" She looked at him as if he were demented and said: "Syphilis? Amfortas was wounded by a spear when he was caught in the arms of the seductress named Kundry!" Michael did not deny this, but went on to suggest that this plot device might be Wagner's indirect or even allegorical way of invoking 19th-century obsessive worries about venereal disease. He pointed out that Amfortas's wound (one inflicted, as Linda had remarked, in a moment of amatory indiscretion) was a wound that will not heal, whose pain is worse at night and is eased only slightly by baths and balsams. In the 19th century, he claimed, these symptoms would have been easily associated with syphilis by the contemporary audience.

To say that Linda was sceptical would have been an understatement at this point. Ever the academic, she announced that if Michael were right, someone would have written about this, and we could find out. To which Michael responded: "Not necessarily. People didn't talk openly about this kind of disease; it was secret and shameful, remember. And today, thanks to the discovery of penicillin in the 1940s, we fortunately don't *have* to know about such things anymore". Still sceptical, but now somewhat intrigued, Linda began mulling over the standard interpretations of this complex opera, one that throughout the years has provoked the most varied and conflicted responses from critics, as they have reacted to its overt Christianity as much as to its equally overt anti-Semitism and misogyny. Over the next few days, her Comparative Literature disciplinary culture provided new contexts. Recalling Baudelaire's infamous *fleurs du mal* and J. K. Huysmans's decadent fin-de-siècle linking of flowers with venereal disease in his novel, *À rebours*, she began to see Wagner's dangerous 'Flower Maidens' in the opera in a new light.

What we realised was that there might be a reason why these female characters were considered particularly dangerous to the Grail Knights, whom the maidens sought to lure to destruction. Michael recalled the history of military campaigns from the 16th century onward, in which the least 'syphilised' army usually won. Linda began thinking about the Christianised reading of the disease of syphilis over the last 500 years – as the scourge of God against the sexually sinful. She also realised that this might also have something to do with the racial as well as sexual issues of the opera: the realm of the Grail Knights declines after its leader, Amfortas, is wounded during that alliance with Kundry, a woman dressed

in what the text stresses is 'Arab' style. Michael concurred, because in the 19th century (as well as later), the discourse of social decline linked to personal and racial degeneration was often invoked not only in the European campaigns against prostitutes and venereal disease, but also in much anti-Semitic writing, including Wagner's own.

As more and more of the pieces of the puzzle began to cohere, we felt certain that others must have written about this, but after much time online and in the library, we found nothing. We finally decided that perhaps the silence was not surprising, not only because syphilis is an embarrassing topic still today, but also because this was the kind of issue that would easily escape a single disciplinary examination: the historical, political, literary, musical, dramatic (and now medical) complexities would demand multiple disciplinary perspectives. Fortunately, scholars of opera at this same time were moving away from the historical and especially formalist approaches that had dominated musicology in the 20th century, and had come to accept that the complex and contradictory nature of opera as an art form, that brings together the visual, the verbal, the dramatic, and the musical, demands a flexible and varied arsenal of interpretive tools. What came to be called the New Musicology in these years started taking into account the larger social and cultural contexts of music in general and opera in particular.

We realised that, given our diverse disciplines, we would certainly bring different perspectives to opera than would musicologists but, in order to be 'listened to' by them, that we would at least have to learn the 'discourses', if not the 'discipline', of that field: that is, we'd have to learn how it formulates and articulates issues in its own terms, its rules of evidence and its standards of evaluation. From musicology, then, we would import and borrow – but with respect and care – as we would from other disciplines like sociology and psychology, when investigating aging and creativity for our book *Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen and Britten* (2015) or history, when trying to understand cultural responses to mortality in *Opera: The Art of Dying* (2004). But we tried to avoid what could be dubbed disciplinary 'tourism' by learning as much as we could about other disciplines' discourses.

We later discovered a term for what we were learning in doing this work together: it has been called a process of gaining 'cultural competence' (Reich & Reich 2006). When disciplinary cultures interact, different kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and skills or practices have to be learned about in order to ensure that the encounters are fruitful ones. Miscommunication is likely, though not inevitable, given that disciplines have their own vernaculars or 'sociolects', not to mention their own worldviews and values, as we mentioned at the start. This communication issue was something we had to face from the start in our collaboration with our first book, *Opera: Desire, Disease, Death* (1996): our different disciplines and our different personalities meant that our writing styles and our modes of argumentation were utterly different. And this meant there was no way we could simply divide up the writing, each tackling certain sections. No one would want that schizoid experience as a reader.

Therefore, we had to create a new, third 'voice' that was the voice of neither of us as individuals, but a kind of "collective singular" (Yancey & Spooner 1998: 51). The only way we found to do this – after much trial and error – was to talk everything through orally, then

put it on paper, and then re-read aloud and revise again: only much talk (and time) would guarantee the merging and unity needed. Does it work? We can only leave it to readers to decide. But there is another issue involved: the communication between the two of us. We discuss and even argue a lot in the process, but a lot is at stake when you are married, so you find a way to keep things at an intellectual rather than personal level when debating. And then there are the idiosyncrasies: for example, as a literary person, Linda was initially loathe to 'give up' her words, to surrender control over the writing style of our work. But she came to see that our 'third voice' required a real melding of our different styles. Letting go, being more flexible and adaptable, being willing to shift roles constantly: these were all things we had to learn were necessary when working collaboratively – as was the single most important quality: a willingness to 'listen' as much as talk!

What else did we learn by working together that we can generalise about? Well, it is both enjoyable and time-consuming, but most strikingly, we do end up in intellectual places where neither of us would venture on our own. In addition, we both became increasingly self-conscious of our own disciplinary formations: to learn disciplinary 'cultural competence', one has to be aware of one's own disciplinary culture's premises, strengths and limitations, or one will not be able to appreciate the opinions, efforts, or even information sources of other disciplines. Our recent investigation of the critical literature on both collaboration and interdisciplinarity has taught us other things that resonate with our personal experience. The Environment Protection Agency in the United States put the prerequisites of this kind of research in an interesting way, telling investigators they should "park their egos at the door", and their insecurities should be "parked in the space next to the egos" (quoted in Reich & Reich 2006: 55). In other words, one must be bold, be brave – but also be respectful. Julie Klein argues that a high degree of ego strength would be useful, but it would be best if it were combined with reliability and resilience, along with sensitivity to others (Klein 1990: 182-183). Reich and Reich offer a list of things that members of different disciplines working together should aim for: besides developing a capacity for self-awareness and self-assessment, and working toward understanding our own disciplinary culture, each must value diversity and be sensitive to the dynamics inherent in the interaction of different disciplinary cultures, especially since there will likely be differences in power relations or access to resources (Reich & Reich 2006: 54).

We return now to these notions of hierarchy and power, because it is not just in scientific collaboration that both exist. Because academic collaborators in any discipline may be of different rank or even role (student/supervisor), the power differential is going to be real and has to be addressed from the start. Another danger of interdisciplinary work, especially in large teams, is tokenism: the presence of someone representing a discipline on a research team who is not either valued or allowed real input. The silencing that happens with this kind of devaluation of those lower in the power or status hierarchy happens too easily, but can be avoided – with awareness and increased 'cultural competence'.

Are there other dangers and downsides? Of course. Some are personal: we have both had experiences collaborating with others that were much less happy ones, perhaps because less was at stake: we were not married to 'them'! And learning how to negotiate

differences might be easier for people who spend a lot of face-to-face time together, though others have complained of the ‘hot-house’ environment when a couple works together³. There are personal risks involved in collaborative work – risks to the stability and health of a personal partnership, friendship or collegial relationship. That said, there is also a real sense of bonding that comes from successful collaboration.

But there are other dangers besides these kinds of personal ones involving human relations, and these involve institutional and professional pressures, especially before tenure in North American universities. Our warning here comes from two scholars, Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede, both of whom were denied tenure in English linguistics because they had done primarily collaborative research (together). They went on to write a book about this experience called *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing* (1990). They took the lead early in making academics aware of the institutional risks and dangers (as well as benefits) involved in collaborative work, especially in the Humanities. Their discipline bears witness to the continuing power of the so-called ‘common-sense’ assumption that writing is inherently and necessarily a solitary, individual act – and not the constructed and socialised process that post-structuralist and feminist theory has been arguing for years (Ede & Lunsford 1990: 5). In the sciences the concept of single authorship is decidedly suspect, and with good reason, but in the Humanities it continues to determine things like tenure and promotion, because the solo individual is still the model for the creative and critical act (Forman 1992: 2). There is an obvious reason why we both waited until we were firmly established in our own disciplines before we started working collaboratively together (Creamer & Associates 2001).

That said, interdisciplinary work (done solo or collaboratively) also faces professional problems⁴, and one of the major ones is the possibility – or likelihood – that it will be judged by mono-disciplinary standards and be found wanting: the fallback position of evaluation is almost inevitably disciplinary. This discrepancy can have an impact on tenure and promotion evaluations, but also on peer review. And this is where power differentials re-enter the picture: in what journal and in which field will a team decide to publish? An article in a sociology journal may be of little professional use to an historian, even if the work the two did was truly interdisciplinary. And it has been shown that it takes longer for the impact of interdisciplinary work to be felt, because it is diffused across multiple disciplines. And what if there are differences in citation practices in different fields?

There might also be what could be called ‘opportunity costs’: if you are doing interdisciplinary work, it is likely going to be at the expense of keeping up in your own discipline. This may be particularly dangerous for students and younger scholars. After all, the job descriptions in academic advertisements in English departments in North America, for instance, are still strikingly period-, nation-, and genre-specific: departments will advertise a position in 19th-century British poetry, for example, and an interdisciplinary scholar will not likely be considered⁵. There are other, somewhat more minor, disadvantages:

³ See Judith Barnard, quoted in Barbara Kleban Mills (1984).

⁴ For more on this, consult “Defining Interdisciplinarity”, Austin *et al.* (1996).

⁵ On other institutional constraints on fostering and valuing interdisciplinarity, see Manata (2023).

frankly, though it is a lot more interesting, it takes much longer to work collaboratively as a team. It is just not very efficient.

Despite this focus on the downsides to collaborative interdisciplinary work, we clearly enjoy doing this kind of work and doing it together. We know what the critical literature says are the positive results and we agree, for the most part (Frodeman *et al.* 2010). It tells us that this kind of research can facilitate the development of creative approaches – things like new methods and analyses of old problems. It can, at its best, identify oversights (and maybe even errors) in mono-disciplinary practice. It can challenge disciplinary paradigms in healthy ways through fresh perspectives. But it can also build bridges (Klein 1990: 27) – one of the most frequent metaphors for interdisciplinarity – and thus allow new and different kinds of communication. Alan Liu (perhaps rightly) stated back in 1989 that interdisciplinarity was then “the most seriously underthought critical, pedagogical, and institutional concept in the modern academy” (Liu 1989: 743). But surely today, with all the increasing interrogation of what it means and how it functions in individual cases, that cannot be true any longer.

To return to Robert Frost’s poem with which we began, we are not on the side of the speaker’s neighbour who repeats “Good fences make good neighbours”: boundaries and divisions between disciplines are not necessary, in the end – not today. As the speaker of the poem puts it so well, there are, however, important questions to ask:

Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
 That wants it down.

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