



New Series, #10, Winter/Spring 1996



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Salutations!

This past year has been a busy one for the Society for Critical Exchange, both in terms of standing projects and as far as new developments are concerned. This newsletter inaugurates what we hope will become a regular practice, that is, narrative reports on the various SCE projects. These reports are able to convey some of the issues that the projects are engaging--issues which in some cases are quite pressing. A case in point is the Intellectual Property and the Construction of Authorship project which, as Peter Jaszi makes clear, is at the front lines in debates concerning new and pending copyright legislation. You will also find a substantial report from Mark Osteen regarding the New Economic Criticism project's recent activities and future directions, as well as related directions in Economics from David Ruccio.

In both cases, the electronic, or at least technological, frontier figures prominently, and the SCE is moving ahead with a Homepage on the WorldWideWeb. We're designing it to incorporate a great many potential features: for a fuller discussion see page 2 of this newsletter. What will be especially noteworthy for this webpage is its potential reflexivity: it will be directly accommodate the needs and/or recommendations of its users. In this way, the website might well serve as the cornerstone of an emergent Virtual University.

On a pedagogical front, the SCE is planning a colloquium, to be held at Case Western Reserve University in the Fall of 1996, which will focus on the intersections between recent theory and criticism of authorship and recent innovations in the theory of composition. Like many of our projects, this is an interdisciplinary enterprise, whose goal lies not simply in setting forth the points of contact between the disciplines but in establishing the kind of dialogue that produces new theoretical paradigms.

The newsletter also serves more quotidian--but not therefore less important--functions. These include a listing of SCE activities over the past year at the Regional MLAs, as well as a form for 1996 membership dues.

Martha Woodmansee

Max W. Thomas

ANNOUNCING THE SCE WEBSITE

Soon after this newsletter reaches you, the SCE's website will be operational. The homepage URL is:

<http://www.cwru.edu/orgs/sce/sce.html>

Designed by Sharon Scinicariello and Eric Friedman, in consultation with Gary Stonum and Martha Woodmansee, the site will eventually include areas for both synchronous and asynchronous discussion. As the site grows, it will include archives of the Electronic College of Theory, and of SCE project materials (conference programs, working documents, abstracts and/or papers, and so forth). It will also feature discussion areas devoted to a range of relevant issues, some of which will reinforce standing projects. The advantage of a website for such discussions is its ability to incorporate archival documents at the same time it sustains dialogue. The initial threads, meanwhile, will serve to:

- provide information about the SCE and its projects
- provide links to theory-related Web Pages and other pertinent sites
- allow for visitors to inquire about the SCE and to make suggestions

Because our homepage is still in its e-infancy, we welcome, indeed strongly encourage, your input. Send along tips for hotlinks and information you would like to see included; tell the designers how you would like to use the site, and the kinds of functions you would like to see the site serve. Sharon reports that she will be able to incorporate a CGI script which will allow visitors to add links to pages themselves; in the meantime suggestions for design should go to Sharon (sgs3@po.cwru.edu) or Eric (friedman@hydra.acs.uci.edu) directly.

The site should be open within a matter of a few weeks, so go ahead and add it to your bookmark files. There will be an ECOT message when it is finally available (see ECOT information at the end of this newsletter if you're not already a subscriber).

It is our hope that the Website will allow for continued dialogue among SCE members, for increased visibility of the SCE's projects. Perhaps even more significant, however, is the possibility within the website for developing and sustaining new projects, at least some of which will directly address the increasing digitalization of the profession.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORSHIP PROJECT REPORT

Peter Jaszi

At the December 1995 Annual Meeting of the MLA, I chaired an SCE Program under the title "Law and Order on the Electronic Frontier," with Charles Stivale (Wayne State, French), Jessica Litman (Wayne State, Law), and Paul Jones (who builds websites for the English Department at the University of Virginia) as panelists. We covered a wide range of topics relating to legal and social regulation of behavior in the digital networked environment, and the audience response appeared to be strong.

This year, we've also been pleased to see the work of the "Construction of Authorship" project cited and relied upon by legal scholars working on intellectual property policy issues. A good example is Niva Elkin-Koren's articles "Copyright Law and Social Dialogue on the Information Superhighway," which appears in the *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal* (Vol. 13, pp. 345-411).

Also this year, Martha Woodmansee and I published an article entitled "The Law of Texts: Copyright in the Academy" in *College English* (Vol. 57, pp. 769-87). The piece grows out of the SCE Forum of the same name which was part of the MLA program in December 1992. One goal of this article was to alert people working in literary studies to several current proposals for the reform of copyright law which could effect scholarly practices if they became law.

In recent months, I have been more and more actively involved in trying to put some of the lessons of the project into practice, by organizing teachers, scholars and others to become more involved in the political process around intellectual property issues. One of the copyright "reform" bills now pending (H.R. 2441/S. 1284) is designed to give "content providers" like publishers, movie companies and record companies greater legal protection when they distribute their works over digital networks (including the Internet). The proposed legislation, in turn, grows out of a controversial White Paper on copyright and the "National Information Infrastructure" (NII) issued late last summer by an Administration study group. Opponents of the new proposals believe

that (among other things) they could threaten the continuation of a wide range of important scholarly and academic activities in the digital environment. In particular, the imposition of a higher level of copyright discipline on digital communications could mean cutbacks on “fair use” and could threaten the development of new “distance learning” technologies. It could also mean that libraries will be unable to give patrons the kind of access to digital materials which they historically have provided to analog ones. And the possibility that “access providers” could be held liable for copyright violations committed by their subscribers raises civil liberties concerns, since it could result in organizations from America Online to university computer departments being forced to monitor e-mail traffic to screen out potential infringements.

There is presently another bill before Congress, the “Copyright Term Extension Act of 1995” that will extend copyright an additional 20 years. Under this bill, copyright would be for the life of the author plus 70 years post mortem. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of letters, manuscripts, out-of-print books, forgotten films, and other materials dating back to the 1920s and 1930s--materials which would otherwise have entered the public domain--would be returned to copyright. If it passes, the bill will put a stop to countless scholarly and educational projects, prospective as well as in progress, that make use of copyrighted materials without producing any benefits in the balance. By the time SCE members read this description, the “Term Extension” bill will in all likelihood be law, in part because organizations like ours did not express their reservations in a timely fashion. However, there is still time to intervene in the deliberations on the NII bill, and it is vital that we do so.

I've helped to put together a new, broad-based organization, the Digital Future Coalition (DFC), which has been formed to oppose passage of the “NII Copyright Protection Act of 1995” in its present form. The DFC describes itself as a diverse coalition of national groups representing copyright holders and users of copyrighted materials, including: educators, educational administrators, librarians, technology companies, civil liberties organizations, consumers and creators. The DFC website contains a wealth of information about the legislation and the various critiques of it -- as well as links to more. Point your browser to: <http://home.worldweb.net/dfc>.

NEW ECONOMIC CRITICISM PROJECT REPORT

Mark Osteen

The SCE recently sponsored two sets of panels growing out of the ongoing New Economic Criticism Project. The first, a double session chaired by Martha Woodmansee (CWRU) convened at the M/MLA annual convention in St. Louis on Friday 3 November at 8:30 a.m.

Part I

1. “‘Rash Speculation’ and ‘Rational Calculation’: The Crisis of 1825 and the Emergence of the ‘Science’ of Political Economy,” by Tatania Holway, Macalester College.
2. “Portrait of Homo Economicus as a Young Man,” by Susan Feiner, University of Southern Maine.
3. “Henry James and the Business of Women in *The Portrait of a Lady*,” by Charis Bower, Tiffin University.
Discussion and comments by Max Thomas, University of Iowa.

Part II

1. “Economic Symbols: The Place of Gender in the New Economic Criticism,” by Elsie Michie, Louisiana State University.
2. “The Business of Utopia: Bradford Peck’s *The World a Department Store*,” by Vivian Wagner, University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign.
3. “In the Red: Plenitude and Exchange in the Economy of (Cultural) Information,” by M. David Westbrook, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
Discussion and comments by John Barbaret, Case Western Reserve University.

Discussion and debate in both sessions was lively and wide-ranging. In keeping with M/MLA practice, papers were distributed to interested attendees ahead of time, and panelists gave brief remarks about their own papers as well as comments about others’ papers. Discussions during Part I centered on the blind spots or gaps in classical and

neoclassical economic models, and on the problems that arise when one attempts to move outside of any closed system to comment upon it. For Part II, discussion focused on the relevance and problems inherent in literary critics' use of economic terms (e.g., "economy," "exchange," "capital") in ways not sanctioned by the discipline of economics. What are the limits of these homologies? Is it legitimate to use "economy," for example, to refer to any system of exchange that is not actually economics? What is, actually, economics? The comments of Susan Feiner were particularly helpful in outlining what economists mean when they use specific terms.

Two more sessions are planned for the 1996 M/MLA, to be held 7-9 November in Minneapolis. (A description and call for papers for these sessions appears in the SCE Continuing Projects and Conference Activities section of this newsletter.)

At the MLA convention in Chicago, a panel entitled "(Un)Settling Accounts: New Languages of Economic Criticism," was held on Saturday 30 December, at 8:30 a.m.

Presiding: Martha Woodmansee, Case Western Reserve University.

1. "Economists, Marxists, Critics: Whose Economics?" by Regenia Gagnier and John Dupre, Stanford University.
2. "Literary/Cultural 'Economies,' Economic Discourse, and the Question of Marxism," by Jack Amariglio, Merrimack College, and David Ruccio, University of Notre Dame.
3. Response by Mark Osteen, Loyola College, Maryland.

Both papers continued the debate about what is becoming a key issue in this project: what is it that we do when we say we are doing "economic criticism?" Gagnier/Dupre's paper provided a helpful capsule history of the movement from political economy to neoclassicism, critiquing the assumptions of neoclassicism and using Lawrence Birken's *Consuming Desire* as a test case, before moving to an outline of the dominant form of economic criticism, which they termed "cultural poetics." Speaking as economists, Amariglio and Ruccio directly addressed the hostility and incomprehension found in conventional economic circles to terms such as "symbolic economy,"

current in literary/economic criticism. First noting the problems in the models of alternative economic thinkers such as Lyotard and Bataille, they then examined what they called "the paradox of economic criticism": how such criticism actually turns the conventional use of economic terms against themselves to show the blind spots in neoclassical thinking. Mark Osteen then briefly outlined the forms of economic criticism currently in practice, and called for continuing exchange between the disciplines with the aim of making economists more self-critical and literary critics more rigorously "economic."

The NEC enterprise continues to thrive. Indeed, both the economists and the literary/cultural critics participating in the sessions agreed that the two disciplines seem to be finding a common ground for genuine critical exchange. These exciting developments suggest a need for yet more conferences, panels, or venues in the future. A conference on pedagogy and economic criticism is in the works. We also invite other ideas for conferences or exchanges, and welcome those interested in helping to plan, organize, or offer ideas about formats or topics.

A volume of papers from the 1994 Conference on New Economic Criticism is under preparation by the conference co-organizers, Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen, and is forthcoming from Routledge in 1997. By featuring essays by both literary/cultural critics and by economists (including Linda Austin, Christina Crosby, Jean-Joseph Goux, Amy Koritz and Douglas Koritz, Marc Shell, Jennifer Wicke, and with contributions by Regenia Gagnier and John Dupre, Jack Amariglio and David Ruccio, and others), the volume aims both to delineate the diversity of approaches called "economic criticism" and to encourage further work along these and other lines.

NEW ECONOMIC CRITICISM: FROM THE ECONOMISTS

David Ruccio reminds the SCE of two upcoming conferences of potential interest to SCE members.

Rethinking Marxism is sponsoring an international conference entitled "Politics and Languages of Contemporary Marxism," 5-8 December, 1996, to be held at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The complete conference description can be found on the Web at <http://www.nd.edu/~ploffmarx>. There will be concurrent sessions, art/cultural events, and plenaries throughout the conference. The conference organizers encourage those working in areas which intersect with Marxism (e.g. feminism, cultural and literary studies, queer theory, postcolonial studies, race and ethnicity) to submit proposals. They also invite the submission of sessions that follow non-traditional formats and sessions with all forms of artistic and literary modes of meaning. The plenary sessions will be interspersed throughout the conference and each plenary session will be limited to no more than two speakers. Selected papers, poems, and other forms of presentation from the conference will be published in *Rethinking MARXISM* and/or in a separate edited volume of contributions. Send submission proposals to: Stephen Cullenberg, Department of Economics, University of California, Riverside CA 92521, USA. Fax: (909) 787-5685. The deadline for submission proposals is 15 August, 1996.

The John J. Reilly Center for Science, Technology and Values will sponsor "The Need for a New Economics of Science: A Conference Dedicated to the Evaluation of Alternative Approaches to the Economic Analysis of Science," 13-16 March, 1997 at the University of Notre Dame. Complete information and a call for papers (the due date is 30 April 1996) can be found at: <http://www.nd.edu/~esent/conference>, or by contacting David Ruccio.

CONTINUING PROJECT AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

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Modern Language Association

Contact: Martha Woodmansee, English, Case Western Reserve University

SCE sessions at the 1995 Chicago MLA convention were divided between the Intellectual Property and New Economic Criticism projects, and are fully described in the reports on these two projects. For the 1996 MLA, the SCE is sponsoring two related panels: "Literary Properties 1: Production: The relationship between the production of books as material objects and their reception, 1660-1830" and "Literary Properties 2: Circulation: All stages/features of the distribution of books, 1660-1830." Martha Woodmansee will preside at both panels.

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Midwest MLA

Contact: Max Thomas, English, University of Iowa

The SCE maintains two standing panels at the M/MLA Conventions. In 1995 those panels were devoted to a double session under the auspices of the New Economic Criticism project. Mark Osteen provides a description of these sessions in his report on the NEC. The success of those panels prompted another double session for the 1996 convention to be held 7-9 November in Minneapolis. The call for papers is as follows:

Part I: Scholarship. New approaches to economic literary criticism. Literary readings of economic texts, economic readings of literary texts. Metacritical essays scrutinizing the problematics of terminologies, homologies, etc. are particularly welcome. Send abstracts to Mark Osteen, Dept. of English, Loyola College in Maryland, 4501 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21210, by 25 March.

Part II: Pedagogy. Classroom strategies exploring the interfaces between economics and literary/cultural studies. We are particularly interested in those with syllabi, course descriptions, pedagogical gambits, etc., for the undergraduate classroom. Abstracts to Martha Woodmansee, Dept. of English, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, 44106, by 25 March.

In addition, John Kuijper will be chairing a session entitled "Distributing Authors: Literature, Target Marketing, and Ceremonies of Capitals at the Turn of the Century." SCE members are especially encouraged to submit an abstract (the deadline is 15 April).

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Northeast MLA

Contact: Max Thomas

NEMLA has undergone a restructuring which eliminated all standing sessions; from 1996 forward, all session proposals will compete for one of the 220 slots. The NEMLA conference continues to be held in the Spring (the 1996 conference is scheduled for 19 and 20 April in Montreal). SCE members are invited to submit papers for panels at the 1997 conference. The deadline for panel submissions is 5 May. SCE members who wish to submit individual papers should contact Max Thomas, who will coordinate a panel submission.

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Rocky Mountain MLA

Contact: Jane Rose (Oklahoma Panhandle State University)

The 1995 RMMLA session was cancelled due to insufficient response: the 1996 meeting will be held in October in Albuquerque. Contact Jane Rose for details regarding an open session sponsored by the SCE.

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Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association

Contact: Marylin Edelstein, English, Santa Clara University

Marylin Edelstein reports on the past year's activities and requests submissions for the 1996 session: About this past year's SCE session (with Paul Douglass as chair and me as secretary): The session was quite good overall. Aldon Nielsen (San Jose State University) gave a fascinating paper on "Black Deconstruction," focusing on the neglected theoretical work of African-American poet Russell Atkins. Caitriona Moloney (Holy Cross College in Oakland) gave a good paper ("I don't like books with a Molly in them like that one") on feminist criticism on Joyce. The last paper was by Kenneth Reinhard (UCLA), called "Reading Lacan avec Levinas," which looked at the relation between ethics and what it means to do "comparative literature"; he focused on the notion of "the neighbor" and proximation etc. The session was fairly well attended.

The November 1996 PAMLA will be at UC Irvine during the first weekend in November. I'll be chairing the SCE's session, focusing on the relationship between critical/literary theory and ethics (although the session is open topic and any good paper will be seriously considered). Either a paper or a detailed abstract (1-2 pages) will be due to the session chair (me) by 1 April, along with a 50-word abstract that will be printed in the program. Papers should be sent to me at: Dept. of English, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara CA 95053.

(Please note: PAMLA and NEMLA have a reciprocal membership agreement.)

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South Atlantic MLA

Contact: Mark Osteen (Loyola)

The 1996 SAMLA convention will be held 8-10 November in Savannah Georgia. After a brief hiatus in 1995, the SCE returns to SAMLA with an open session, and submissions are invited. If you wish to submit a paper for consideration, contact Mark Osteen, or you may submit a proposal directly to the SAMLA office (Georgia State University, University Plaza, Atlanta GA 30303-3083), although they will forward it to him or to Max Thomas. The deadline for submissions is 1 May.

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South Central MLA

Contact: Jo Hebert, Texas A & M

Please contact Jo Hebert regarding the SCE sessions at the 1996 SCMLA.

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Current Projects

The sessions sponsored by various SCE projects are largely covered by the national and regional MLA sessions. Current projects include:

Intellectual Property and the Construction of Authorship (contact Peter Jaszi or Martha Woodmansee)

The New Economic Criticism (contact Martha Woodmansee)

Woman-Nation-Narrative (contact Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, Oberlin College)

Rethinking Introductory Courses in English (contact Sally Robinson, Michigan)

The large number of open sessions at Regional MLAs during the current year can serve as fertile ground for members who wish to initiate and carry through a longer term project. There is no cap on the number of concurrent SCE projects; indeed function of the SCE is to sustain them through its Regional activities, as well as its own conferences. Please do contact the directors with ideas and initiatives.

The Electronic College of Theory

The Electronic College of Theory is the SCE-run electronic-mail conference and discussion group on literary theory. Contributions to the College may be sent by electronic mail to the moderator (xx124@po.cwru.edu), who bundles them and electronically mails the bundles to subscribers. During the academic year subscribers can expect to receive five to ten such mailings each month.

The College has now grown to include about half of the SCE membership. If you include an electronic-mail address on your membership renewal form, we now routinely enroll you on the Electronic College mailing list. You can also subscribe by sending a request to xx124@po.cwru.edu. All Electronic College subscribers must eventually join the SCE, but we encourage the curious to participate in the College for several months before deciding whether to become members.

Please keep us posted if you move or otherwise change addresses and if you will be away from your electronic mailbox for an extended period of time. Many computer accounts set limits on how much mail can pile up, so if you go away for the summer and your mailbox fills, any additional mail gets bounced back to the sender. Sometimes it is obvious why the mail has bounced back, but sometimes it just seems as if you had disappeared from the planet. In addition, computer systems change, and sometimes mailboxes change along with them. This also results in an electronic Return to Sender, although one that is usually easy to repair.

Membership Form and Dues Notice

Name:

Mailing Address:

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Telephone Work:
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Email Address:

Areas or Projects of Interest:

1995 Dues (\$15 regular; \$20 joint; \$10 student, \$ _____
part-time, retired or unemployed; \$20 outside
North America)

Check here if 1996: _____
Check here if new membership: _____

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