A Retrospective: SCE from 1982 to 1990

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If you wish to replace an official institution by another institution that fulfills the same function—better and differently—then you are already being reabsorbed by the dominant structure.
—Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 232.

Orthodoxy [. . .] which aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa, exists only in the objective relationship which opposes it to heterodoxy, that is, by reference to the choice—hairesis, heresy—made possible by the existence of competing possibilities and to the explicit critique of the sum total of the alternatives not chosen that the established order implies.
—Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 169.

When I finished graduate school, New Criticism was the reigning mode of interpretation. Criticism based on Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* provided the main challenge to it. In the department from which I received my degree the majority of faculty regarded themselves as New Critics. Only one faculty member was an advocate of Frye's theory. A few survivors of the battle of the scholars and the critics that Jerry Graff chronicles in his *Professing Literature* considered themselves literary historians rather than literary critics.

Soon after I became an Assistant Professor, literary theories seemed to multiply rapidly with the effect of shifting critics' attention steadily away from New Critical tenets (Vince Leitch chronicles these events in his *American Literary Criticism From the 30s to the 80s*). One of the formative events was an international symposium on "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" sponsored by the Humanities Center of Johns Hopkins University. The participants were René Girard, Georges Poulet, Lucien Goldman, Tzvetan Todotov, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Derrida. Four years later, a transcript of the proceedings, edited by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, was published as T*he Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*. This volume, together with *Structuralism*, edited by Jacques Ehrmann, introduced American critics belatedly to European theorists whose *post*-structuralist works followed soon thereafter in translation.

Equally important, *New Literary History* under the editorship of Ralph Cohen was founded as part of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the University of Virginia in 1969. Two years later, *Diacritics* under the leadership of Philip Lewis was founded at Cornell University. Both journals focused on new developments in literary theory. By the mid-seventies, interested American critics had been introduced to an astonishing range of critical theories, mostly from Europe.

Not everyone got on the theory bandwagon, however. Most faculty relied on the method (and the singular form here is intentional) of interpretation they had cultivated in graduate school—usually some species of formalism contextualized in literary history, roughly along the lines drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic criticism in *Theory of Literature* by René Wellek and Austin Warren. Critics were, as they probably still are, reluctant to depart from the familiar practices and cultivate the esoteric and arcane vocabularies that were spreading across the critical landscape. In most departments, the one or two faculty members who followed developments in literary theory often found it difficult to exchange ideas about new theories with their colleagues. One of mine, for example, insisted that phenomenology was no different from New Criticism; I was reminded that, according to my Heidegger professor, reading *Zein und Zeit* required a change in attitude parallel to the experience of a religious conversion.

In April of 1976, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Miami University of Ohio-Oxford, where I was teaching, sponsored a conference on "The Communalities Between the Sciences and the Humanities." I was on the steering committee and had reviewed the papers submitted by humanists. A paper by Leroy Searle from the University of Rochester captured my attention. I recommended it to the committee and it was accepted. At the conference, Patricia Harkin and I invited Leroy to dinner. We spent the evening listening to him delineate plans for a scholarly society devoted to theory. With his characteristic intensity, he argued that there was no forum for persons in the humanities interested in theory; rather, such persons generally found themselves isolated in their departments. He was persuasive. That summer Patricia Harkin and I drove to the University of Rochester and met with Leroy and Annie Searle to discuss plans for inaugurating the Society for Critical Exchange.

SCE began as something of a counter-institution. Patty and I agreed with Leroy that the Society should not be sponsored by any university to avoid the inevitable constraints that accompany financial support. Our early conversations followed in the same spirit. We would advocate "exchange" instead of the lecture model favored by the MLA. Yet, we would affiliate with MLA and its regional societies in order to "subvert" them in the direction of critical exchange and collaboration. Leroy and Annie had purchased an old but quite functional press and we would use it to circulate papers that seemed to us challenges to the reigning theoretical orthodoxies published in high gloss journals. We would invite persons from other disciplines into our deliberations. We would be the anti-MLA and hoped to replace it. Critical exchange would change the conduct of criticism and move it away from the master/apprentice structure of more conventional schools of thought.

As Pierre Bourdieu noted in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, beliefs (doxa) become orthodox only in opposition to heterodox beliefs which over time tend to get amended and absorbed into the mainstream beliefs. It is probably accurate to say that, during the years I was its Director (1982-1990), the heterodox stance of SCE in its inception was absorbed into the institution of literary criticism. In retrospect what occurred, while I was SCE's Director, is explained by Foucault:

> If you wish to replace an official institution by another institution that fulfills the same function—better and differently—then you are already being reabsorbed by the dominant structure. Foucault 232.

How did this happen?

I believe that there were five ways in which SCE served the same function as MLA: (1) it provided a stage for critical stars in order to attract members, (2) it sponsored events and projects that provided resume entries for its members, (3) it was structured as a not-for-profit *corporation*, (4) it sought funding from the same institutional base, and (5) as its Web site notes, "it was instrumental in the institutionalization of theory in North American Literary Studies." While we are on this last point, let me pause to recommend to you David Downing's *The Knowledge Contract: Politics and Paradigms in the Academic Workplace*, a very cogent analysis of the implications of institutionalization.

SCE as a stage for critical stars

I was aware that announcing a symposium or conference program with no recognizable names would not likely draw much of an audience. So, my strategy in setting up such events was to fill the programs half with recognizable names and half with persons who were not well known but whose work, in my view, deserved attention. What I did, in effect, was to create programs just like the MLA's. Most sessions at MLA feature well-known figures and not so well known figures. Many of the persons who submit proposals to academic conferences use the strategy I used. As a result, half of the list of SCE presenters reads like the names in Vince Leitch's index to *American Literary Criticism*: Ralph Cohen, Fredric Jameson, Gerald Graff, Stanley Fish, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, Richard Ohmann, and Gayatri Spivak. SCE events contributed to what David Shumway has called "the star system" of the institution of literary criticism and provided for its lesser-known contributors entries for their résumés.

SCE as a provider of résumé entries

In 1982, Patricia Harkin and I started *Critical Exchange*, which became SCE's journal. In a counter-institutional spirit, we did not seek funding from our university and instead produced *CEx* as a desktop publication. Though our intention was to publish what we believed was a theoretical advance, we nonetheless focused each issue on the work of a well-known theorist. Typically, we published an interview with a major

theorist and accompanied it with essays by lesser-known figures. Knowing that major figures in literary criticism would not wish to have their work published in a stapled, desktop journal, we counted on their willingness to be interviewed in a publication devoted to their work.

Despite our good intentions, *CEx* was different from *PMLA* only by virtue of its minor status and publication format. Moreover, to sustain the publication, departmental funding eventually came into the picture. To interview the major theorists, we used the funds from Miami University departments to which SCE members had access. For example, the directors of the Midwest Modern Language Association usually choose a well-known critic as keynote speaker. Universities close to the convention city often share travel and honoraria expenses with M/MLA in return for a lecture on their own campus. As a member of the M/MLA Board of Directors, I suggested that the organization hold its annual meeting in Cincinnati and that Miami University be one of its hosts. That made it possible for us to do the Fredric Jameson issue of *CEx*, inviting his students to attend his on campus lecture as respondents to his talk and publishing their responses together with his talk. In the case of our Derrida issue, the SCE members who were in the French department invited Derrida and interviewed him for SCE. A similar structure produced the issues on Ralph Cohen, Jerry Graff, and Barbara Hernnstein Smith.

SCE as a not-for-profit *corporation*

Shortly after its founding, Leroy proposed that SCE be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization, giving it status as a legal entity. To do so, we had to establish by-laws for SCE and officers. Thus, Patty became SCE's first President and Leroy, Annie, and I served as the other officers. During Leroy's tenure as Director, we didn't follow the by-laws. They existed only as a document on file. When SCE came to Oxford, Ohio, I decided that, if we had by-laws, we should follow them, unaware of where this decision would lead us. I began to hold elections, to create a dues paying membership, and to hold meetings of the Board of Directors where annual reports were given. Soon we elected Ralph Cohen President and a Board of Directors who did not always vote in favor of the proposals that the founders brought to it. We commissioned a logo, purchased stationary, and established a bank account with SCE checks. In short, we were structured exactly like our big brother corporation, MLA. Though not especially active in the projects we were sponsoring, SCE's Board of Directors now controlled them even though their control was tantamount to an occasional veto—about which Patricia Harkin will have more to say. There were other consequences of following the by-laws.

SCE and institutional funding

When Ralph Cohen became SCE's President, he gave a "Presidential Address" at SCE's annual cocktail party during the MLA convention. In his address, he proposed that SCE undertake a new project, a comprehensive Encyclopedic Dictionary of Critical Terminology. This

suggestion became the "Vocabularies of Criticism and Theory," VOCAT for short. This was an immense undertaking. Ralph had secured a contract from Oxford University Press to publish a two-volume reference work. Suddenly SCE was swept-up into the American university system. Under Ralph's direction and with the expenditure of incredible amounts of time and energy, we developed a very detailed proposal and submitted it to NEH, requesting 2.5 million dollars to support the work. Miami University suddenly found funds for us—sending a group to the University of Virginia and to Washington, giving us an office for the VOCAT project, supplying us with computers, and so on. Our proposal met with considerable success and found its way up the chain of command at NEH landing on Lynne Cheney's desk. The then Director of NEH rejected the VOCAT proposal as I learned from an NEH staff member who called me from her home to explain unofficially what had happened.

Unrecognized at the time, in retrospect it seems ironic that our previous SCE project was GRIP, the Group for Research into the Institutionalization and Professionalization of Literary Studies. This project was a collaborative critique of the ways Literary Studies had been institutionalized in the American university system. It had its origins in the job crisis of the late 70s and early 80s. The difficulties of PhD graduates in literary studies obtaining employment in universities was very much on the minds of GRIP's founders: David Shumway, Steve Nimis, Jim Fanto, and me. I was the only tenured faculty in the group. David and Jim were temporary hires in English and French. Steve was an untenured Assistant Professor in Classics. Let me also mention here that Steve Mailloux was the person who first got me interested in the project by pointing out that the MLA was about to have its centennial celebration. Steve suggested that research on the establishment of literary studies in this country would be a timely sort of project for SCE.

Thanks to the reproductive structure of institutions, when institutional critique became the subject of countless articles and books, it was institutionalized just as other "schools of thought" had been. Had the GRIP papers been published in refereed journals instead of the desktop notebook format we used, it might have been institutionalized in libraries as well. Whatever effects it had on the practice of literary criticism came as the result of presentations at MLA and its regional affiliates or from essays that originally appeared in the *Grip Reports* but eventually found their ways into established journals.

SCE and the institutionalization of theory

I don't know who is the author of the claim that SCE "was instrumental in the institutionalization of theory in North American Literary Studies" but I believe that a case can be made to support it. Given SCE's counter-institutional origins, the claim that it failed in its founding mission can be supported by the same evidence.

Although this observation may be accurate, it does not reveal that we were actively attempting to prevent the normalizing of theory. Because we were theorizing, we became, despite ourselves, a part of a "theory industry." Our critics often pointed this out to us—the more often our criticisms gained adherents, the more our theorems

became a subject of study in classes on literary theory as critiques of institutionalization multiplied, particularly if similar criticism were published in high gloss journals. Institutional reproduction is indiscriminate.

Though founded to encourage collaboration (the GRIP project being its best known collaboration), SCE was nevertheless perceived as a part of the competitive "industry" that produced theoretical texts. David Downing recently commented in an e-mail message, (11/19/2006) that "the privatization of higher education, commoditization of everything, pressure for standardized assessment as a mode of social control, increase in flex labor, part-timers at the cost of job security and teaching quality, etc., etc. [. . .] all affect our ability to collaborate[,] which was a main point of *The Knowledge Contract*." The socio-economic conditions David mentions had much to do with the formation of a "theory industry" as candidates in a depressed job market rushed into publication deploying the "hot" topics in single authored essays, which had more value institutionally. David added: "and I learned much of that [critique] from SCE and *Token Professionals*." SCE's GRIP project, which was focused on a critique of institutional-ization, was simply "reabsorbed by the dominant structure."

In the early 90s, when "theory" had become a "field" and "theorists" were being hired, David Downing and I team-taught an online course on literary criticism linking our classes at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Miami University of Ohio. Without any hint of embarrassment or irony, one group of students formed an online discussion about "the big names in theory" because they knew they had to learn about them to do well in the job market. Derrida, Lacan, Foucault were three of the "big names" whose work was difficult to understand. A few years later, thinking back on this group, I wrote "Requiem for a Noun," arguing that the idea of "theory" should give way to the practice of "theorizing," which had gotten lost in the rush to interpret the latest theoretical text. It was a period during which essays such as "Gallop reading Lacan reading Freud" were quite common. My essay didn't stem the tide of interpretations of theoretical texts. It took an "anti-theory" reaction to the theory industry to accomplish that.

In retrospect, SCE was swept up into the theory industry but not with the willing participation of the persons who were directing its projects and organizing its forums. When Martha Woodmansee took over, SCE moved in a new direction drawing upon issues in legal studies and economics that were also concerns in literary studies. As she is about to step down as SCE's Executive Director, we face the question: *What now?*

Should its current advocates fold up their tents and migrate to more habitable lands? Or, can its theoretical terrain be re-cultivated by some new vision?

Given what I have said about SCE's misadventures during my tenure as Director, you would probably conclude that I would advocate the first alternative—migrating to more habitable lands. However, that is not the case. I believe that error is heuristic. Errors, in my view, lead to more productive habits.

What can be learned from the circumstance that counter-institutions get institutionalized as Foucault pointed out a quarter of a century ago? To answer this question, I return to Bourdieu's articulation of the dynamic: He argued that beliefs (I'll use his term "doxa") exist as un-examined assumptions, held but not questioned. When doxa is questioned, orthodoxy is produced by regularizing doxa into dogmatic propositions to defend it against the heterodox beliefs that challenge it. The dogmatic character of orthodoxies results from the need to maintain believers. Critical practices are based on assumptions of which the initial practitioners were usually well aware. Over time, the practices are normalized and their theoretical basis is no longer debated. It becomes the reigning doxa. At some point in time, a critic who is dissatisfied with the normative practices establishes novel ones that are controversial. The ensuing debates polarize critics into orthodox and heterodox camps. The advent of deconstructive criticism, for example, was dramatized by actual debates between Meyer Abrams and J. Hillis Miller who toured universities arguing the pros and cons of deconstructive criticism.

Bourdieu's account of the dynamic relations among doxa, orthodoxa, and heterodoxa can be understood as an historical dynamic. New Criticism was the reigning critical practice during the forties, fifties, and into the sixties. After the first wave of New Critics who argued in support of its basic tenets (John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, René Wellek), New Criticism became an established practice and its tenets no longer required defense. By the early sixties, few questioned the merits of New Criticism. Then the work of Jacques Derrida inspired a new critical practice which was named "deconstruction." It was heresy to New Critics. Thus, New Criticism became an orthodoxy and Deconstruction a heterodoxy. Neither seem to have survived in the dogmatic reductions of them that characterized the controversy. Both have been absorbed into mainstream criticism barely recognizable as the fierce rivals they once were.

As I have already argued following Foucault, a "counter-institution" that sponsored heterodox views is destined to be integrated into the existing structures because it serves an institutional function needed to control changes in the institution without changing its basic structure. Thus SCE has never been the "counter-institution" that, in my view, it set out to be (Leroy, Patty, and Martha may have understood SCE's founding intention differently).

From my perspective, the most visible aspect of the problem SCE set out to address was the difficulty of having a forum in which critical exchanges could occur openly without the usual institutional constraints. The emblem of those constraints was MLA. As the principle scholarly organization of literary critics, it legitimized their practices and controlled the protocols of critical exchanges. Using the conduct of societies such as MLA as instances of typical exchange forums and formats, we—or perhaps only I—believed that changing their structure would change the quality of the exchange. The institutional constraints MLA placed upon critical practices were many and varied:

- It established in its bibliography what schools of thought were on the critical map.

- It published authoritative volumes on how to conduct literary criticism.
- Its convention committees decided which issues should be addressed.
- It allocated times and spaces to certain critics and issues rather than others.
- It published in *PMLA* what were considered by its editorial board to be exemplary instances of literary criticism.

And so on, and so on.

As I have noted, SCE tried to change the competitive protocols of exchange that MLA legitimized in order to create forums that were more conducive to collaboration. In a paper entitled "Critical Protocols," I distinguished between agreements to disagree and agreements to "agree" (understood as agreements to concur). I argued that an agreement to disagree was the basis of competition among critics justified by a theory of falsification, which assumes that conceptual advances occur as the result of disproving current tenets. In my view, competition among critics did not advance literary criticism to the extent that collaboration (agreements to concur) did. Literary criticism is made up of "discourse communities" centered in the work of particular writers and periods. I understand such discourse communities as "critical concurrences."

As I argued in Critical Protocols: the root meaning of concurrence is an agreement. A concurrence is a social structure in which several persons because of an accord that a set of inter-related problems need attention, come together to maintain or change a situation. Concurrence is not based on consensus. It is not required that all concurring agree on fundamental principles. On the contrary, the differences among those concurring are valuable in their collaboration. Rather than seek a superficial agreement on a conceptual frame-work, the acutely differing perceptions each person has of his or her situation form a novel "approach" to the problem. In a concurrence, persons do not apply pre-conceived methods. Concurrences break down the conceptual frameworks persons bring to the "event" in favor of heuristically re-negotiated articulations of the problem, which can resolve or diminish it. The negotiation is ongoing. Agreement and disagreement are in continuous dialectical relation. Whereas at one moment several articulations exhibit striking coincidences and govern the groups' plans for action, at another stage, especially when the pressures of experience break down the always temporary frame-works, other articulations reformulate the problems. Even instances where some persons remain in constant disagreement with others in the group can have positive ramifications when such disagreements help sharpen the perspectives of those whose views coincide. Critical protocols have little to do with the structure of critical forums.

What we learned from our early SCE experiments is that that changing the structure of critical forums did not change the critical protocols. I have a vivid memory of an SCE conference David Bleich organized at Indiana University that demonstrates this. One of the presenters, who believed that no serious discussion could take place if more than three people were in it, broke an audience of some hundred

or more persons who had come to hear Gayatri Spivak into groups of three, instructing them to turn their chairs toward each other rather than toward the stage. Presumably preferring a more orthodox forum, some groups of three evidently discussed the fact that they were prevented from hearing what Gayatri had to say because other participants had revolted. I recall a person from one of the groups standing on a table and demanding to know why they could not hear Gayatri. Following his lead, the other participants insisted on turning their chairs back into an audience for her. As an organizer of the forum, I was furious that Gayatri could not present her views. The group of three in which Gayatri was included were probably the only ones disappointed to be turned back into an audience. The persons who came to the event came to be an audience for Gayatri. They did not want the structure of this exchange to be changed, nor did I.

I am not arguing here that the format of an exchange is irrelevant to the exchange but that the context of the exchange is relevant to its format. The format of the exchange is dependent on the motives of the persons in the exchange. The relation between protocols and forums is not dependent on the structure of the forum but upon the disposition of the critics entering it.

At the SCE conferences organized by David Bleich, we successfully provided non-traditional forums for critical exchanges, not as a counter institution but as an organization that sponsored them, that is, as an institution. Considering that, if you want to play in a baseball game, you generally have to go to a baseball park, we might say that if you want to engage in an intellectual exchange, you have to go to the forum in which the game being played is the one in which you want to engage. Considering also that baseball is a distinct game because of its distinctive rules, we might say that if you want to have a particular kind of exchange, you go to the forum whose rules enable it. My mistake was to think that bringing people who normally expected a conventional meeting structure into a forum with more open format would change the quality of their exchanges. This was an error. Was it heuristic?

After I resigned as the Executive Director of SCE and Martha Woodmansee took over, I turned my attention to online collaboration. The turn was not away from critical exchange but toward electronic forums for critical exchange. What attracted me to online collaborations was the possibility that persons at considerable distances from one another could exchange ideas. With help of Patricia Harkin, David Downing, and later Victor Vitanza, I established Alternative Educational Environments, an online "sequel" to SCE. The sequel did not differ from its prototype. Changing the structure and format of exchanges by moving from print to electronic media did not improve the quality of the exchanges as the TicToc project demonstrated.

Shortly after I came to UIC, I talked David Downing into publishing the proceedings of the TicToc project as an issue of *Works and Days*. At the time, I was still committed to changing the format of a critical exchange in order to increase the opportunities for unconstrained dialogue. The issue we tackled in 1996 was how should an English Department respond to the expanding uses of the Internet. TicToc stood for Teaching In Cyberspace Through Online Courses. The

acronym referred to the situation in which a department avoiding this issue would find itself—facing a time bomb that would go off sooner than its unprepared administration expected. We set up a very elaborate but invisible system of online exchanges that only required participants to send emails to our website. Long before the sophisticated collaboration software to which we now have access, we worked laboriously with a freeware software that required hours of attention. We hoped to encourage collaboration by making it as effortless as possible. Central to our plan was the premise that, if we invited our colleagues to openly speak about their distrust, criticisms, and fears related to the invasion of technology into their practices of research and teaching, then those of us who hoped to improve instructional technology would benefit from hearing about them. To us it seemed a win-win situation.

With everything carefully set up, we inaugurated the exchange. No one responded. We tried all kinds of tactics to get participants to post their thoughts. Almost nothing was contributed. beyond what we were posting to get the conversation going. In the end, to make a full issue of *Work and Days*, we had to transcribe parts of the f2f symposium with which we ended the project and publish the observations of the speakers we had invited to the experiment. Once again the open-ended format of the exchange did not enhance it. In retrospect I have to admit that I had repeated my earlier error. Thanks to David Downing's hard work, the exchanges were turned into productive ones, largely by incorporating more conventional modes of exchange into the electronic ones.

From these experiments, I learned that for an efficacious critical exchange one had to work with persons who were already committed to a particular issue and willing to collaborate which requires a disposition to listen to colleagues and modify one's views. The difficulties we had in getting members of the English department to address the implications of online work and teaching were largely owing to the circumstance that they had other commitments to other problems and did not find spending their time on the problems we were addressing a good use of it.

This brings me to the design of the Arts and Sciences Collaborative Exchange Network Dream or ASCEND which was based on what we had learned from the SCE and AEE collaborations. To explain ASCEND, I need to describe how this collective emerged from the Virtual Harlem Project.

In 1998, knowing of my interest in technology, a colleague of mine at UIC, Jim Hall, who had appointments in English and African American Studies, told me about a virtual reality reconstruction of Harlem, New York, in the 30s designed by Bryan Carter to accompany his courses in the Harlem Renaissance. I emailed Bryan, visited Virtual Harlem at the University of Missouri, hosted his group at UIC, and as a result became the coordinator of the Virtual Harlem project. What separated Virtual Harlem from the SCE and *Works and Days* projects was that

(1) its collaborators were committed to doing what the project required because it afforded an opportunity to extend the research they were already conducting,

(2) numerous university departments provided the team members—English, Engineering, African American Studies, Fine Arts, History, Computer Science, Communication,

(3) the project was an instructional technology effort pertaining to courses in an established curriculum,

(4) was linked in an international online network, and

(5) was focused on building a model within the constraints of historical accuracy.

I should add a sixth aspect—it employed cutting edge technology. A shared problematic tied the contributors together even though each contributor had a different perspective on it. They used whatever means of exchange were available to them and with which they were familiar, making various adjustments along the way. The protocols of their exchanges were developed *ad hoc*.

There are many descriptions and analyses of the project, the most complete and recent being *Configuring History: Teaching the Harlem Renaissance through Virtual Reality Cityscapes*, which Patricia Harkin, Bryan Carter, and I edited. The Virtual Harlem project drew interest from many quarters of the academy and from persons outside of it—for example, MOBE (an organization of Black Entrepreneurs), SciTech (a small hands-on science museum), and others. The Arts and Sciences Collaborative Exchange Network Dream (ASCEND) grew out of the project as an effort to develop similar networked research projects that linked different departments, universities, and community organizations here and abroad.

The various misadventures I experienced while directing three successive research groups have lead to a conception of a Collaborative Educational Network (CLN). The key to a CLN is a suitable subject matter to model. One of the reasons that Virtual Harlem was an appropriate subject matter for a CLN was that it models history and provides a wide range of cross-disciplinary connectivity. Because of its subject matter—the Harlem Renaissance—this project linked scholars and students from all over the world who were studying or researching African American culture and/or virtual experiences into a learning network. Our interests formed a "concurrence."

CLN projects, such as Virtual Harlem, depend upon cross-disciplinary collaboration. Without it, they cannot exist. Commitment to a project comes from disparate inquiries that could not have been brought into connection with each other without recent technological advances. Familiar institutional boundaries were differently articulated, as Patty would say.

You might ask: Are CLNs relevant to SCE which is an organization devoted to theory? I believe so. In a number of respects they continue the pattern of activities during Martha's directorship during which SCE "has gone on to innovate across traditional boundaries of the humanities and social sciences."

Ideally, SCE offers its members a structure of critical exchange suitable to collaborative research projects. It seems to me that there is a theoretical project already underway for which SCE can provide a forum for critical exchange designed as a CLN. At this point in time, developments in cognitive science point to fertile theoretical grounds

to cultivate. A number of recent publications concern the relations between cognitive science and the humanities, namely—*Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts*; *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*; *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*; *More than Cool Reason*; *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*; *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*; *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*; *Positioning Theory*; to mention a few. These works draw upon recent work in cognitive science—"a new field that brings together what is known about the mind from many academic disciplines: psychology, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, computer science" (Lakoff xi), neuroscience, literature, and communication. As Varela, Thompson, and Rosch point out, cognitive science "stands at the crossroads where the natural science and the human sciences meet" (13). The ramifications of cognitive science for the humanities and social sciences is considerable. What the ramifications are, moreover, is highly controversial since, in Lakoff and Johnson's words, it is a "challenge to western thought."

The theoretical ferment that surrounds this network reminds of the theoretical ferment of the 1970s and 80s when American critics were first introduced to thinkers who challenged the prevailing view of criticism. SCE could be a forum for exchanges about the ways that concepts usually demarcated as scientific or humanistic are now not so easily compartmentalized, or should I say "departmentalized"? Thinkers and scholars who do not customarily have serious critical exchanges with one another now might very well find a need to do so. The Virtual Harlem project may have come out of an intellectual climate of cross-disciplinary research that is just beginning to take hold in various domains, spurred by communication technologies designed to deal with the globalization of inquiry as well as commerce. Just as it was the case that my experience with collaboration as director of SCE prepared me for online collaboration, so SCE's recent move toward cross-disciplinary inquiries may make it a forum for our times.

Jim in 1976

In retrospect, as I near retirement, I believe that the ASCEND mode of networked collaboration is the wave of the future in critical exchanges. The groundwork has been laid by numerous cross-disciplinary partners for twenty-first century critical exchanges. Though I am at the end of my career, I would be delighted to help persons who are interested in this type of critical exchange reinvent SCE, as Leroy, Patty, Martha, Steve, Vince, Dick, the various Davids (Downing, Bleich, and Shumway), many others, and I have had the opportunity to do during our careers.

Perhaps it is time for another conference on "The Communalities between the Sciences and the Humanities."

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THE SOCIETY FOR CRITICAL EXCHANGE Inc.

P.O. Box 475
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1 December, 1982

Dear SCE member:

1982 has been a transition year for the Society for Critical Exchange. We have moved our headquarters from Seattle, Washington to Oxford, Ohio. An administrative committee has been established here to accomodate SCE's growing membership and their interests. At the same time SCE's activities have increased dramatically (see enclosed SCE News & Notices) making many demands on our small staff. We hope you will be patient with us as we endeavor to reorganize.

In previous years, we usually kept everyone who joined SCE at one time or another on our mailing list. As costs mount, this policy is no longer feasible. So, if you have not sent in your membership form and dues for this year, please do so now. We need your support to continue SCE's work.

We hope you have a merry Christmas and we wish you a happy and prosperous 1983.

Cordially,
James J. Sosnoski
Chair,
SCE's Administrative Com.