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新経済批評－研究序説

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The New Economic Criticism: Preliminary Foundations

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I

Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen's co-editorial work, *The New Economic Criticism*, is a collection of essays that attempts to explore varied ways in which literature and economics are mutually illuminating. Just as the subtitle "Studies at the Intersection between Literature and Economics" indicates, the editors place great emphasis on the intersection at which to make critical exchanges between the discourses. The emphasis is based on their primary concern about uncoordinated relations between literature and economics. An important economist in this very context is Donald (Deirdre) McCloskey. In her writings, she argues that economics is certainly scientific, but at the same time it employs a language composed of such rhetorical devices as tropes and tales by which to explore and explain economic phenomena. In *The Rhetoric of Economics*, for example, she declares that economics is both analytical and rhetorical: "When an economist says, as he very frequently does, 'The demand curve slopes down,' he is using the English language; and if he is using it to persuade, as he very frequently is, he is a rhetor, whether he knows or likes it or not" (57). Thus McCloskey's argument is that, consciously or not, economists as scientists use rhetoric insofar as they use language.

It should be hastened to add that McCloskey's aim is never to demystify economics as unscientific; but it is her belief that science has

a rhetoric and therefore that economics has a rhetoric, too. At the same time that she sees economics as a science, she is hence able to discover natural links between economics as a social science and literature as a human science. In *If You're So Smart*, subtitled "The Narrative of Economic Expertise," she points to economics as a form of storytelling:

Economic stories depend on rhetoric. The point is not to expose the rhetoric and then condemn it for being rhetoric. Rhetoric is unavoidable. An economist or historian cannot avoid rhetoric since any argument has a rhetoric, a style of argument, taking "argument" to mean "any designs on the reader." A collection of random facts and assorted bits of logic does not add up to an argument; but as soon as a writer advocates a model or a story in which the facts and logic are to fit he has begun to argue. If one is to argue in favor of this or that story there is no way of being non-rhetorical. (56)

In McCloskey's view, human and social sciences are interrelated with one another, "since any argument has a rhetoric." If any writer is incapable of "being non-rhetorical," it is because she uses "a model or a story."¹ In other words, a writer argues by building a model or telling a story; in either case, she designs and reasons her argument so as to persuade her audience, namely "the reader." In this point, the economist can be seen as a specific type of storyteller who uses a model "in which the facts and logic are to fit." By focusing on the act of writing as storytelling, McCloskey has thus aimed to interface economics with literature—and the thrust of the present essay is to reexamine this very interface in order to refine economic criticism.

McCloskey's provocative writings have been greatly influential. In

the preface to her collaborative work with Arjo Klammer, she gives the following emphasis to her achievement: "Economists have begun to see that their talk is rhetorical—in the ancient sense of honest argument directed at an audience. Realizing at last that economics uses argument besides axiom-and-theorem and data-and-regress, they have begun to listen more intently to arguments elsewhere" (*Consequence* 4). That is, McCloskey reveals that behind the economist's argumentation is the ancient art of storytelling. According to Woodmansee and Osteen, however, not only economists but also "[o]thers have attempted to extend McCloskey's insights (not always with her approval), particularly a growing cadre of feminist and neo-Marxists" (22). Nonetheless, she has confronted the three major problems: 1) "McCloskey's work has been met with much resistance among economists, most of whom still adhere to the paradigms of neoclassicism-mathematization, objectivity, free rational choice, exogenous tastes, etc"; 2) "Marxists, for example, have asserted that McCloskey's anti-foundationalism is ambivalent and half-hearted, charging that after she demonstrates the invalidity of Cartesian first principles, she turns around and reinstates them"; and 3) "Even McCloskey has sometimes failed to analyze her own tropes, and has thus been challenged for celebrating the 'marketplace of ideas' without recognizing it as a metaphor" (22). Compared with the first two oppositions, the last one differs in that it exemplifies that economists use metaphors not only convincingly but also misleadingly. As an economist, Paul Krugman points out:

Policy entrepreneurs generally prefer their models in the form of metaphors: for example, they may describe the U.S. economy as being like a corporation, competing in the world marketplace, and therefore metaphorical models can all too easily create a false impression of understanding and sophistication, and

those who rely exclusively on metaphor often fail to notice that their fine phrases are covering crude conceptual or factual mistakes.” (28)

Considering the above argument over seemingly economic forms, McCloskey’s critique of economics can be supported: economists, including policy entrepreneurs, do use rhetorical devices and metaphorical models. This fact serves to demonstrate discursive affinities between literature and economics.

McCloskey proves the literary aspects of economics, but her aim is actually twofold. At the same time that she lays great stress on the need of improving economics by urging economists to refine their models and redefine economics, she claims that most literary critics have found their pathways to economics by acquiring a set of economic knowledge from Marx and Marxists. Indeed, economic criticism was initially practiced by the Frankfurt school and Leftist critics of the 1930s such as George Lukács. During the postwar period, however, their approaches were rather weakened by New Criticism. Woodmansee and Osteen refer as follows to this historical process: “the profession was dominated by the allegedly apolitical procedures of New Criticism,” which “almost exclusively focused on the manifest context of texts—characters’ behaviors, monetary terms and tropes, etc—often without detailed documentation even of the author’s financial habits or beliefs, and certainly without considering national or local economies or contemporary economic practices or theories” (13).

The current withdrawal of New Criticism into the background is due largely to the emergence of new critical theories, such as poststructuralism, cultural materialism, and New Historicism. Significantly, these criticisms are closely associated with Marxism. For example, Fredric Jameson is generally considered to be a poststructural Marxist, who “has been of

special importance to the reemergence of Marxist critique” and whose “work is marked by a sophisticated use of concepts from poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and other forms of critical thought, but it remains firmly rooted in the Marxist tradition” (Booker 81). As for cultural materialism, it goes without saying that it is materialism based on Marxism, although, as stated before, it attaches particular importance to culture as a superstructure relatively independent of the economic base. Lastly, new historicism is also inseparable from Marx’s materialism: “The new historicist emphasis on material practices in society bears obvious affinities to the historical materialism of Karl Marx, and new historicist analysis in general often recalls the cultural criticism of neo-Marxists such as Raymond Williams” (Booker 137). McCloskey’s claim is thus supported by a brief overview of twentieth-century critical theories: Marxism as a whole has played an important part in forming economic criticism as a discourse. Is it, then, possible for economic critics to expand their horizons of this specific interdiscursivity under such an inflexible condition? To answer this question is the chief task of the next section.

II

While admitting Marxism’s long-standing influence on a wide variety of literary and cultural criticisms, Woodmansee and Osteen reexamine critical exchanges between economic and literary studies. In their idea, it is not only Marxist criticism but also other economic discourses and practices that serve to refine economic criticism: “we present in this volume a number of critical investigations and exchanges that will help to refine and redefine economic criticism as both a literary-critical practice and as a constructive critique of economics” (12). In order to deal with economics in general, the editors assert, it is necessary for literary

critics to use economic terms, metaphors, and paradigms with acute consciousness of how they are employed by economists.

For this reason, Woodmansee and Osteen introduce Jack Amariglio and David F. Ruccio's essay, "Literary/Cultural 'Economies,' Economic Discourse, and the Questions of Marxism," into *The New Economic Criticism*. The essay begins with: "Symbolic Economy? Libidinal Economy? General Economy? Political Economy of the Sign? Textual Economy? The Economy of Desire?" (381). What is problematized here is such "economies" as "Libidinal Economy" by Jean-Francois Lyotard, "General Economy" by Georges Bataille, and "Symbolic Economy" by such thinkers as Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, and Pierre Bourdieu. McCloskey refers to all these kinds of "economy" as "ersatz economics." In addition, Amariglio and Ruccio, as economics professors, are also skeptical of such "'economists' as Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Bataille, and Giroux, many of whom have little if any knowledge (or so it was alleged) of economics proper" (382). These "economists" have thus been excluded by economists who consider all the ersatz economics as literally "noneconomic."

Krugman addresses the problem confronting economics: "while there is a steady accumulation of knowledge in economics, there is also a constant market for doctrines that play to popular prejudices, whether they make sense or not" (xiii). Supposing that "popular prejudices" indicate ersatz economies, his professional mission is to deal with "economic sense and nonsense," just as his book's subtitle shows: *Economic Sense and Nonsense in the Age of Diminished Expectations*. In the preface to the book he says: "The economy cannot be put in a box" (xi). The sentence indicates that economists cope with the complexities of the economy. In Krugman, economists can be likened to such physicists as climate modelers, who cope with the complexities of nature: "when

climate modelers are asked to answer a speculative question, like the prospects for global warming, they produce a range of answers (and a set of bitter disputes) as wide as that of economic forecasters asked to assess a policy initiative" (xii). Given such particular emphasis on the complexities of the economy itself, it can readily be imagined that such economies as libidinal economy, general economy, and textual economy, have made economists inaccessible to the realm of literary studies.

As a consequence of proliferation of seemingly economic approaches to literature and culture, the practitioners have thus brought a new set of problems. Woodmansee and Osteen maintain that "one of these problems has been an imprecision or promiscuity in the use of terms such as 'economy,'" because "overuse will empty such terms of their economic meanings and hence of their instrumental value. It is thus essential for economic criticism to continue to refine and justify its use of economic terms—to ask why, for example, one uses 'economy' instead of some other form" (38). In this way, the editors problematize overuse and misuse of economic terms and therefore stress the need for elaborate justification to use them. At the same time, however, they insist that economic critics should become able to develop literary studies by liberating economic criticism from an extremely rigid framework of economic studies:

[A]lthough we believe that literary and cultural critics should familiarize themselves with what economists mean by terms such as "choice," "value," and "credit," we do not believe that literary critics should be limited by them. Indeed, many literary and cultural critics would point directly to this narrowness of definition and disciplinary practice as a major deficiency in contemporary economics. Even some economists agree that economics has long been dominated by a narrow scientism that, by ruling out of bounds any unconventional method or

explanation, merely certifies the political status quo. Economists, then, warn literary critics of opposed dangers: on the one hand, that of emulating the narrowness of conventional economic theory; on the other, that of expanding economic models and terms beyond their viability. (12)

The above passage refers to the relations between scientists and economists, and between economists and critics. First of all, economics has long been under hegemonic control of "a narrow scientism." By definition, hegemony is maintained not merely by threat, but by consent as well, and it is true that "a narrow scientism" has long dominated economics, but it is also true that given its "narrowness of definition" and "narrowness of conventional economic theory," economics has long embodied "a narrow scientism." Indeed, just as Marx's *Capital* is subtitled "A Critique of Political Economy," nineteenth-century economists were generally referred to as "political economists," whereas most twentieth-century economists profess themselves as scientists—social scientists, to be exact. Hence it is quite usual for modern economists to define economics by quoting from Lionel Robbins's 1932 critique, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*: "Economics is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses" (15). In retrospect, however, his definition of economics as "the science" is the origin of a major problem in contemporary economics whose scientism is open to criticism.

Woodmansee and Osteen take precautions against a narrow economic scientism, putting particular stress on the need of "a critique of the 'Big Science envy'" (27). While criticizing ersatz economics, Amariglio and Ruccio are critical of economic scientists as well: "many of our radical colleagues, we have sadly learned, are eager to be Big Scientists" (384). Similarly, McCloskey in *Knowledge and Persuasion in*

Economics argues: "Economics, however, are neurotic about 'science.' They think that knowing, really knowing, means following something called the 'scientific Method.' They think that if you don't know it that way then you don't know much" (55). Thus these three quotes indicate that scientism of economics has been argued both inside and outside the field of economics.

In spite of its scientism, and its critique as well, however, economics is widely received. In Krugman's view, its general acceptance is "because its conclusions have a direct impact on government policies that affect almost everyone" (xiii). At the national level, economics is relatively accessible because its judgments or forecasts impact not only "government policies" but also "everyone." At the professional level, however, economists make economics rather inaccessible to everyone else. "Professors generally prefer their models mathematical," Krugman argues, and "mathematical models can be constricting, leading you to ignore what you haven't figured out how to represent as an equation" (29). Although "mathematic" is not necessarily synonymous with "scientific," those constricted mathematic models built in the economics department tend to reflect the professors' preference or adherence to the scientific. At the same time as economics releases itself from "a narrow scientism," therefore, it retains "a narrow scientism."²

Woodmansee and Osteen claim that the primary task of economic critics is to avoid "emulating the narrowness of conventional economic theory" and "expanding economic models and terms beyond their viability." What is demanded is therefore both adherence and resistance to economics: that is, economic critics are supposed to accept "economic models and terms" and to discredit "the narrowness of conventional economic theory." In this point, economic criticism is a particular kind of dynamics characteristic of association with and dissociation from

economics. What is calling for is, then, "not a generalized interdisciplinary space but a certain rhythm of disciplinary attachment and detachment, which is designed so as not to let the question of disciplinarity disappear, sink into routine" (Readings 176). In order neither to be "a generalized interdisciplinary space" nor to be "routine," economic criticism must make itself rhythmic and dynamic through "disciplinary attachment and detachment," each of which is exactly a critical and methodological principle of the new economic criticism.

III

As Woodmansee and Osteen declare, the new economic criticism "attempts to discover the rifts and bridges between economic and literary/cultural studies and to generate useful critical exchanges between the disciplines" (38). As metaphors, "rifts and bridges" correspond precisely to detachment and attachment: that is, the new economic criticism discovers "rifts and bridges" in order to detach itself from and attach itself to economics and "to generate useful critical exchanges between the disciplines."

Just like economists, therefore, new economic critics need to be equipped with self-criticism, which is fundamental to any interdiscursive exchange that requires a sense of difference between discourses. As a twentieth-century thinker who discovers varied nineteenth century discourses to be "a discourse of truth" operated by "the will to truth" (55), Foucault warns us: "We must not imagine that there is a great unsaid or a great unthought which runs throughout the world and intertwines with all its forms and all its events" (67). This indicates that there is no all-embracing principle with which to unite all discourses (although the opinion that there is no all-embracing principle

is itself a potentiality of constituting an all-embracing principle).

The point is that it is interaction and not unification that allows interdiscursive exchanges, and what has been clarified so far is that the new economic criticism is continuously placed in an in-between space, since it is neither literature itself nor economics itself. For this reason, most economic critics agree that homology is an important way in which they play an intermediary part between the disciplines. True, Woodmansee and Osteen affirm that the new economic criticism aims at "exploitation of the homological method" (38). It is equally true, however, that they are cautious of that method. Admittedly, homology is an ideal term to explain the critical stance and practice of economic critics as well as an ideal form to explore similarities and differences between literature and economics, but nevertheless it leaves room for discussion.

A difficulty in homologization lies in that the more one discovers homologies between entities, the more s/he finds it difficult to distinguish between homology and identity. When Pierre Bourdieu articulates the homology between "linguistic exchange" and "economic exchange" (66), for instance, he appears to have little or no intention of particularizing differences between those exchanges. If homology is really different from identity, then the task of the homologist is not only to insist that these concepts are different from one another for the reason that "the structural *homology* between fields does not imply structural *identity*" (Johnson 8), but also to indicate what makes them different from one another. Once we attempt to differentiate the concept of the structural homology from that of the structural identity, however, we confront paradoxical problems.

By structural homology, Bourdieu means structural correspondence. Nonetheless, since he draws a parallel between money and language, his

recognition of structural correspondence between money and language is evidently based on his cognition of an ontological difference between them as two individual entities. In order to make a symbolic/linguistic system homologous to an economic system, therefore, Bourdieu must demonstrate not only structural homologies between economic and linguistic exchanges, but also ontological differences between money and language. Paradoxically enough, however, what he demonstrates throughout his writings is neither homologies nor differences, but only affinities.

To repeat, the new economic criticism aims to be continuously situated at the intersection between literature and economics. The practitioners are therefore supposed not merely to discover sameness or likeness between entities, but also to explore what differentiates them so that they can contrapuntally make critical exchanges between the discourses. In order to attain this goal, literature must function as an interdiscursive space in which economic theories are employed to make theoretical analyses; and it is through those analyses that the theories become examinable and our responses become possible. At the very close of their introduction, Woodmansee and Osteen conclude that the new economic criticism makes "critical exchanges aimed at enriching both literature and criticism" (41). What is articulated here is exactly true of every criticism that aims to achieve interdiscursivity.

Having reached the above conclusion, we must hasten to answer a number of predictable questions as to the new economic criticism. First of all, it is certainly worth arguing that if hegemonic control is maintained not merely by threat but by consent as well, the acceptance of theoretic models built by professional economists is suggestive of the adherence to hegemonic economism. It should be emphasized, however, that literary studies are capable of incorporating into their vast universe of discourse

a wide diversity of theories such as feminism and Marxism, each of which is generally accepted not simply as an ism but also as literary criticism. The first and foremost task in this respect is to recognize literature as capable of making critical responses to varied theories, let alone economic ones. Indeed, theoretical and textual analyses are positively codependent upon one another in literature:

Theory can help us not only better understand literature but also use literature better to understand the world outside of literature. Nonetheless, literary theory, however fascinating in its own right, does not function independently of literature itself. It is designed not to replace literature as a field of study but to provide tools for the appreciation and understanding of the richness and evocative power of literature. (Booker 5)

In terms of theory, literature is not just passive; but it is evocative as well: it incorporates theories and generates responses. In this sense, the introduction of social sciences into the humanities enables us to make critical exchanges between them and in particular between literature and economics—economics as “the world outside of literature.”

Another assumable question is concerned with the future of economic criticism. Since its fundamental purpose is to form critical relations between literature and economics, the new economic criticism may be taken as a bureaucratic criticism that aims to preserve the discursive status quo. It is true that Woodmansee and Osteen make no predication about the possibility of creating a new discourse, although they use such terms as “literary economic criticism” (14) and “economic literary criticism” (21). Their primary goal is to invite us to conduct studies at the intersection.

IV

At this point, the new economic criticism may be assumed as somewhat adherent to negative dialectics advocated by Theodor W. Adorno. "As a sense of nonidentity through identity," articulates he, "dialectics is not only an advancing process but a retrograde one at the same time" (157). Broadly speaking, his concern lies in the very tension between thesis and antithesis rather than their synthesis as a form of "identity." It must be noted, however, that literature is by no means the antithesis of economics and vice versa. In other words, they are by no means polar opposites, just as various affinities between money and language suggest. And yet Adorno's concept of the nonidentity justifies that creating a new discourse as the synthesis of literature and economics is not always an imperative for practitioners of the economic criticism.

Additionally, Giles Gunn can be mentioned in that he makes another justification for nonidentity between discourses. In his essay entitled "Interdisciplinary Studies," he refers to the relation among anthropology, history, and sociology: "When the academic field now called anthropology first attempted to carve out a space for itself between history and sociology, it was described by one of its opponents, and not altogether inaccurately, as 'a disciplinary poaching license'" (243-34). The tension between anthropology and "its opponents" indicates that each discourse attempts to defend itself by generating particular knowledge, and therefore that in conducting an interdiscursive study "images of encroachment, trespass, offense are inseparable" (Gunn 244). In retrospect, the tension among history, sociology, and anthropology can certainly be seen as the relation among thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Significantly, however, all these three discourses are still existent as viable disciplines: in other words, history and sociology have never been

absorbed into anthropology. This suggests the possibility of generating a new discourse without annihilating or polarizing associated discourses.

At the very end of the essay, Gunn concludes that interdisciplinarity can be achieved through recognition "of how knowledge is always open to further interpretation and criticism, of how understanding is always susceptible to further correlation and realization" (255).³ With knowledge's openness and understanding's susceptibleness in mind, new economic critics place particular weight not only on knowing but also on "not-knowing, a forcing of what and how" (Barthelme 12). The pursuit of the not-knowing is neither an attempt to magnify one field nor an attempt to mystify another, but it is to understand and expand the universe of interdiscourse between them. This essay is an introductory orientation toward the not-knowing.

Notes

¹ It should be noted that there are other scholars who have also pointed to human and social sciences as the form of narrative. For instance, Hayden White refers to social sciences as the form of factional storytelling and to human sciences as fictional storytelling: "narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictionally storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine" (14). It is worth mentioning in this context that White specifies history as the field covering both fictional and factional aspects, in that it reflects the historian's (actually) subjective understanding of and (seemingly) objective telling of events.

² In academia as a whole, "the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors,'"

because "the oppressed find in the oppressor their model of 'manhood'" (Freire 27-8). In this sense, the task confronting economists is to reflect on scientism they have inherited from their oppressors. In order not to be "oppressors" or "sub-oppressors," in other words, self-criticism is required of economists. Significantly, this is equally true of economic critics.

³ In connection with knowledge's openness, Jonathan Culler articulates the interrelatedness among theoretical studies: "the importance of theory is to make an open-ended commitment, to leave oneself in a position where there are always important things one doesn't know," and "to undo, through a contesting of premises and postulates, what you thought you knew, so that there may appear to be no real accumulation of knowledge or expertise" (207-8).

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新経済批評—研究序説

論文要旨

本稿は Martha Woodmansee と Mark Osteen が提唱する「新経済批評 (The New Economic Criticism)」を検証しながら、文学と経済学の新たな学際性を模索する。社会科学としての経済学は数式を多用した限定的な意味における「科学」を標榜する傾向にあり、人文科学としての文学は経済学—多数の学派に基づく経済学—をマルクス経済学に限定して援用または経済学の専門用語などを誤用する傾向にある。これら問題点を考慮しながら、本稿は両学問の類似性と相違点を認識することの重要性を強調する。例えば、Donald McCloskey が指摘するように、経済学は数式を用いながらも言語による論証を行うことにおいて修辭的である。また Pierre Bourdieu が指摘するように、言語と貨幣は機能的に類似する点が多くあり、それゆえ文学と経済学の「相同関係 (homology)」が考えられる。しかし相同関係を発見する一方で、それら学問間の絶えざる緊張関係を維持しながら新たな相互関係を構築する必要があり、その際の媒介を果たすのが新経済批評である。換言すれば、文学は経済学を始めとする諸科学の理論を導入しながら、それら科学に新たな返答をすることが可能な「場」であると認識することで、両学問は相互的な知的活性化を永続できる。かくして本稿は、文学と経済学の学際性の追求は「未知 (not-knowing)」の探求であると結論する。