1 Thinking with Students

Deliberations on the History of Educational Reform

When we look at the 1870s, it is the tension between our opinions and theirs, our ideologies and theirs, that matters most, that enables us to be aware of some of our blindness and its causes. If emancipation can come from a study of the history of opinion, it is not from disembodied intellectual history, not from a mindless record of social events, but from...the history of ideas as they are hammered out and encountered in action.

(SILVER 96)

In *Education as History*, Harold Silver argues that efforts to historicize educational practice have favored the "easier route of describing the structure of educational systems, the motives of providers, [and] the intricacies of policies" rather than face "questions relating to educational realities, to the impact of education, to its role in cultural and social processes" (21). One way to illustrate the problem with this "easier" historical approach is to turn to the work of the three figures who have dominated discussions of educational reform over the past decade—Allan Bloom, E. D. Hirsch, and William Bennett. There can be no question that these men and their ideas have garnered a great deal of attention in the media and in the academy. Indeed, it is easy enough to believe that these reformers embody the zeitgeist of the Reagan-Bush era, for it was during this time that Bloom and Hirsch both produced best-selling books about the crisis in the academy's values and that Bennett came to power as Reagan's polemical secretary of

education. And to this day the work of these three men continues to symbolize the conservative threat (or promise) to put an end to academic freedom, affirmative action, critical education.

But what do we actually know about the material consequences of what these educators have said or of how their words have been used? We know that each has sold a lot of books. And we also know that Hirsch and Bennett have, separately, established their own publishing ventures, spinning off an array of anthologies and textbooks to help nervous parents provide their children with the cultural information and moral guidance that the schools now apparently refuse to disseminate. Finally, we know that critics of this conservative movement have not come up with any comparably marketable alternative.[1] As suggestive as the popularity of these conservative tracts on educational reform may be, though, the truth is we don't know, in anything approaching concrete detail, how Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*, Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*, and Bennett's *Book of Virtues* have been put to use once they've been acquired. Nor do we know whether these authors or their arguments have played a significant role in altering the structure of the educational system or the content of the students' educational experiences. As of this writing, all we do know is that Bloom called for a return to the Great Books, Hirsch for the abolition of cafeteria-style curricula, and Bennett, most famously, for the elimination of the Department of Education he once headed — and that, so far, not one of these reforms has come to pass.

This is not to say that we know they have had *no* effect on the educational system in the United States. Nor is it meant to imply that we can never know whether they have made any difference or not. Clearly, these three educators have all had an effect at the level of national debate by serving, if nothing else, as reliable straw figures to be repeatedly dismembered at academic conferences from coast to coast. But here, too, we don't know whether the fusillade of countercritiques, rebuttals, and denunciations has had any material impact on shape of educational policy or on the experience of students currently in the educational system. Around the country the coffee tables of intellectuals now display Gerald Graff's *Beyond the Culture Wars*, Henry Louis Gates's *Loose Canons*, bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress*, and Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson's *Higher Education under Fire*, but have these books succeeded in answering the "conservative backlash"? That is, have they successfully supplied those committed to multiculturalism with a strategic arsenal for making the academy more responsive to the needs of students outside the mainstream? Has all the criticism heaped on Bloom, Hirsch, and Bennett led to a detectable change in the material prac-

tices that structure the academy? in the systems for evaluating student work? in the mechanisms for policing and maintaining current hierarchies of distinction at work sites across the university? The critiques and the metacritiques proliferate but, we must ask, to what measurable or discernible consequence?

It is easy enough to overestimate the importance of such critical work. As Ian Hunter points out in *Rethinking the School*, the enduring interest that historians have in the educational theories of Wilhelm von Humboldt and John Stuart Mill persists despite the fact that, as Hunter bluntly puts it, "the line of critique that flowed through Humboldt and Mill has had no discernible impact on the development, organization or reform of the modern school system" (140). From Hunter's vantage point, it would be much more fruitful if educational historians attended to school designers and teacher-trainers like Samuel Wilderspin and David Stowe, who, though obscure now, played a pivotal role both in organizing the physical space in which students learned and in developing the hybrid pedagogical practice for promoting self-formation and citizen formation that teachers rely on to this day. This ongoing interest in the ideas of Humboldt and Mill, despite their irrelevance to the history of actual institutional practices, is reinforced by histories that give ideas center stage and a surrounding academic culture that traffics in the production and dissemination of ideas. We see and value what we are trained to see and value. And, within the academic environment, this means we attend to critiques, interpretations, methodological elaborations — to the development and testing of, as Hunter puts it, "principled positions"; we are much less likely to consider whether or not such intellectual work has material effects in the world at large or in the local sphere of academic practice. We know, of course, that texts act in quite unprincipled ways when they fall into the hands of actual readers. (If this weren't the case, what need would there be for such extended training in learning how to read according to academic standards?) And we know as well that texts, by themselves, don't and can't make anything happen: texts require readers. Thus, for a critique of education to have a material effect on the structure of the school system or on the students' experience of that system, that critique would have to be taken up and put into practice by someone — or, better yet, a group of someones. And for this to happen, the reader of Humboldt or Mill, Stowe or Wilderspin, Bloom or Graff would have to put the book down and take some kind of action that would go beyond critique, such as altering classroom practice, training teachers, redesigning the curriculum, assuming an administrative position. Ideally, there would be time prior to such action for deliberating over how best to

proceed. But to remain trapped in this deliberative space, critiquing the critiques and pursuing all imaginable alternatives, is to restrict oneself, a priori, to acting in the ideational rather than the social world.

For those securely employed in the academy, being trapped in the realm of ideas has its material rewards, as the central figures in the culture wars are well aware, since this ongoing struggle has provided the academy's headliners with countless opportunities to speak at conferences, to engage in public debates, to appear in special issues of academic journals, and to generate more text, more books, and bigger, fatter c.v.'s.[2] In other words, trafficking in ideas *does* have material consequences for academics and others involved in the business of higher education, by making an even deeper rut in the most well-worn of pathways for the circulation of cultural capital. But, again, to know that careers are made through visible participation in central academic debates does not mean that we know what effect this critical activity has had or might have on those other residents of the academic scene—the students. To date, most accounts of educational reform have factored students out of the equation, perhaps on the assumption that students always do as they're told. Because working under this assumption significantly reduces the challenges involved in historicizing educational practice, factoring students back into the history of educational reform is bound to be perceived as unnecessary and as counterproductive by those who think that the students' experience of education can be deduced from mission statements and policy papers. Nevertheless, placing the student at the center of discussions of educational reform can serve to reinvigorate interest in versions of those neglected questions that Silver was cited posing at the opening of this section: What forces shape the students' experience of educational reality? How does one measure or determine the impact of educational reform on students? What role does the education of students play in relation to other cultural and social processes?

A brief example will illustrate how productively disruptive it can be to attend to the construction of "the student" in rhetorics of reform. Gerald Graff, an institutional historian and educational reformer, has received a good deal of attention for pointing out that while spirited disagreement defines the core of academic life, the undergraduate curriculum seems designed to conceal these disagreements from the students. Graff's awareness of this problem grew out of his groundbreaking work on the institutional history of English Studies, *Professing Literature,* where he argues that a "university is a curious accretion of historical conflicts that it has systematically forgotten" (257). Having tracked the rise and fall of the ideological battles for the soul of English Studies between philologists and generalists, schol-

ars and critics, and theorists against themselves and all comers, Graff concludes that revitalizing education in the United States would require reforming the curriculum so that it would begin to focus on these forgotten and submerged conflicts.[3] If this reform proposal is followed, Graff suggests, the gap between students and their professors may be narrowed, and students may learn that knowledge itself has "a history that they might have a personal and critical stake in" (258).

While Graff's commitment to historicizing academic debates has led him to outline a laudable project of curricular reform, that same historiographic approach has, unfortunately, allowed him to rely on the most readily familiar representation of "the student" to justify his program for teaching the conflicts. Thus, the problem, as Graff defines it, is that students currently "are exposed to the *results* of their professors' conflicts but not to the process of discussion and debate they need to see in order to become something more than passive spectators to their education" (*Beyond the Culture Wars* 12, original emphasis). Elsewhere he depicts students as "nervously stammer[ing] questions" before their professors, as made "confused or indifferent" by the chaos of the curriculum, as the ones "most vulnerable to ideological coercion," and as currently "bullied by their teachers' political views" (82, 107, 146, 169). Students are, in short, the victims of an educational system that successfully transforms potential agents for change into "cynical relativists who care less about convictions than about grades and careers" (106). The power of this commonplace to organize our perceptions may be felt in its utter obviousness: no one—and particularly no teacher— has trouble calling to mind relevant experiences to support this vision of the student as alternately victim and villain.

There's a rhetorical necessity, though, behind the seemingly effortless conjuring of this commonplace, for the representation of the student as victim/villain covers the proposed reforms with moral dignity. And with this version of the student secured, it is but a small step, whatever the reform proposal, to listing the opposing attributes one is striving for: a student who is an active learner rather than a passive memorizer, eloquent rather than stammering, confident and committed rather than bored and indifferent, devoted to learning for its own sake rather than to grades and increased earning potential. Thus, with regard to Graff's approach, we learn that his program of reform aims "to make entrenched positions open to question, to destabilize established views, and to tap a greater part of the enormous potential of our educational diversity"; that it has helped to get students "to appreciate central disagreements and to be more critical of prevailing categories"; and that teachers have reported its ability to encourage more stu-

dents to "become independent, self-motivated, and willing to try out intellectual styles" (172–82).

As laudable as these goals are, it is worth noting that on either side of the reform process "the student" tends to remain an absolutely anonymous, deracinated, ahistorical, malleable, infinitely penetrable being, as quick to embrace cynical relativism as critical, self-reflexive thinking; conservativism as conscientization; a pedagogy of despair as one of possibility. In other words, deploying the commonplace representation of the student as a victim on the verge of becoming a villain tends to foreclose further consideration of what students actually do in school, making a fool of anyone who would ask how we know students experience school in the ways described.[4] To put it yet another way, invoking the ever-pliable student helps cover over the embarrassing fact that we know almost nothing about how students experience the culture of schooling or why some students fail and others succeed. And, as we will see, this use of the student also helps conceal the bureaucratic role that teachers and reformers play in giving order to the heterogenous student population. We tell ourselves we are doing it for their own good.

An Unwelcome Discovery and Its Uses: Intellectuals as Bureaucrats

Silver has his own example of how historical research into actual sites of educational practice can serve to unsettle common assumptions about the ease and the benefits of pursuing educational reform. He describes a research project he and Pamela Silver set out to do involving a church school that relied on the monitorial method for educating the poor in Kennington, South London, during the nineteenth century. Silver explains that he and his coauthor brought to their study the expectation that they would find all the known horrors of the monitorial system confirmed: there would be evidence that students were ruthlessly disciplined, that education consisted of nothing more than rote instruction carried out by a series of barely literate functionaries, that anything would be an improvement over this exercise in instruction by the clock. And yet, once the Silvers delved into the school records, they had to concede that their evidence told quite a different story about the practice of the monitorial method at this particular school. As Silver describes it, "The school sources revealed a more imaginative and humane approach to children and to school affairs, and stronger school-community links than we had expected, or could explain" (18). Although the Silvers could have remedied this problem easily enough by de-

claring the Kennington school "atypical," doing so would have required accepting the "typical" account of the monitorial system, something that they felt they simply could not do, for their own investigation had uncovered the fact that "historians had surprisingly done no research on the monitorial system as it was operated in practice" (19).

Silver sees two causes for this gap between how much we know about principles of educational management and how little we know about what happened at the local level once those principles were implemented. First, he asserts that educational historians have accepted "crude models of social structure and social change," producing state-centered accounts of educational practice that are then used to provide retroactive explanations: in Britain, these explanations are used to account for the development of the twentieth-century welfare state; in the United States, they are used to explain the development of industrial democracy (24). Compounding the faults of this methodological approach, by which only those events in the past that confirm one's view of the present are perceived as warranting attention, research on educational history has been further constrained by a profound sense of "embarrassment" about how little is actually known about the implementation of educational principles, about diversity among schools ascribing to the same principles, and about what was taught and what was learned (26–27). To probe beyond the central, most visible documents of debate, legislation, and public policy only further exacerbates this sense of embarrassment, since probing of this kind inevitably reveals that there is no necessary or direct correlation between what gets said about education and what actually happens in the schools.[5]

To embark on such localized research into institutional practices is also to trade the perspective of the broad overview for an unmistakably narrowed focus on individual cases, an exchange that comes at considerable cost since a "case" only becomes meaningful by being situated within some larger argument—say, the dramatization of an alternative historiographic approach, or the revelation of findings that confirm, deny, challenge, or complicate common conceptions of intellectual practice. In other words, the "turn to cases" must be followed by a return to generalities, hypotheses, overarching observations, and speculations if this methodological interest in the local is to have any chance of escaping the charge of mere parochialism. In the case studies that follow, I have elected to focus on institutionalized instances of some of the more frequent referents in the ongoing debate over multiculturalism and the role of education in contemporary society: Matthew Arnold and "the best that has been said and thought in our time," the Great Books approach, British cultural studies and the interest in pop-

ular culture, and the introduction of ethnographic methods to the class-room. By historicizing these separate attempts to reform educational practice, my admittedly narrow preoccupation with concrete efforts to establish specific reforms at specific institutions during specific times opens out to the most important educational questions of our time: What responsibility does the academy have to its students and to society more generally? Is it the academy's job to prepare students for future employment? to raise consciousness? to expose students to academic codes and conventions?

As it turns out, the initiatives discussed here do establish that educators in Britain and in the United States have struggled with these issues for well over a century. But, to my mind, this inadvertent discovery is much less important than what the case studies reveal about how the various answers given to these questions have been transformed into institutional practices that define the work of students and teachers. Specifically, they show how the horizon of possible educational reform has been defined by prevailing figurations of "the student" and the general assumption that intellectuals and bureaucrats stand in opposition to one another. My method throughout has been to read the absent figure of the student back into the institutional history of English Studies. In this instance, thinking with students—that is, using "students" as a concept with which to think anew that institutional history—has had the paradoxical effect of problematizing the reform ideal dear to the hearts of those of us who dream of making the classroom function as a more humane, democratic space. In such a democratic classroom, which one finds celebrated most notably in those two classics of educational reform, Peter Elbow's *Writing without Teachers* and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student is replaced by a learning community in which collaboration reigns supreme and teachers think along with, rather than over or against, their students. It is an attractive vision—one that powerfully shaped my own early interests in becoming a teacher—but it is a vision that does not, and I now think cannot, engage with the bureaucratic realities of teaching in an institutional context.

This was not a welcome discovery. Indeed, this book began as an effort to marshal evidence to support a position I held long before the "research" ever began: that under the right conditions, the classroom could operate as a free space for learning, where passive students would be jolted to life and the groundwork for radical social change would be laid. However, because my interest in "the student" recentered my attention on conjunctions and disjunctions between educational theory and educational practice, my own work in the archives compelled me to concede what *everyone* working in the

academy already knows at some level—namely, that all teaching occurs within the context of a deeply entrenched bureaucratic system that exercises any number of material constraints on what must take place in the classroom, on who and what may be allowed in that space, and on how those entities and materials may interact. What made this discovery particularly unwanted was that it seemed to eliminate the possibility of substantial structural change. One might hope to tinker with, say, extant mechanisms and methods for soliciting, assessing, and responding to student work, or with schemes for attracting a more diverse student population, but the historical inertia of the institution and its practices will ensure that even these modest changes will encounter a general, if low-level, resistance. In this way, my interest in the student inadvertently led me to view higher education's bureaucratic apparatus as inescapable at both the macro and the micro levels: that is, where teachers see a liberatory practice and rising opportunities, most students see a set of requirements, an arbitrary system of assessment, an impediment to advancement—a bureaucracy, in short. Thus, looking at education from the student's point of view compelled me to see what I, as a teacher, preferred not to see.

However unpleasant this was, I knew my disappointment at discovering the inescapable presence of bureaucratic mechanisms in the academic sphere was not, in fact, "mine" alone. Few teachers have warmed to my suggestion that we are all, essentially, bureaucrats toiling away in bureaucracy's embrace. Once I understood the significance of this shared revulsion, I realized that my affective and intellectual responses to my own research could be used to situate me as an historical subject. To give a brief example: when this research began, I had meant for Matthew Arnold to figure, as he does throughout much of the academy, as the whipping boy whose whipping would inaugurate my own "oppositional" project. I would identify him as a bookish elitist, out of touch with the world, blind to the needs of real students. All that remained for me to do was connect the dots and move on to the next exercise in critical historiography. And, as it happened, I discovered that there was no shortage of evidence to support such a project: opening *Culture and Anarchy* to almost any page effortlessly provided me with all the damning quotes I would ever need; contemporary work that decried Arnold's influence, such as Chris Baldick's *The Social Mission of English Criticism* and Edward Said's *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, was everywhere ready to hand. Everything was going quite smoothly until I stumbled on a footnote that brought my developing argument crashing to the ground.

As it turns out, Arnold was not the wealthy aristocrat I assumed him to be. Rather, he had spent his life as one of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools,

traveling the country to visit the nation's poorest schools and to inspect the often gruesomely disappointing results. This unwanted discovery led me to read in parts of the Arnoldian corpus that originally had held no interest for me—Arnold's book-length reports on foreign education, his annual inspection reports on British schools, his anonymous tracts concerning the Revised Code. In order to understand these works, I had to move to other parts of the archive altogether: parliamentary papers, histories of popular education, pamphlets for the design and implementation of the monitorial method of instruction, handbooks describing the duties of school inspectors. In place of Arnold the literary and social critic, there slowly began to emerge a complex field of bureaucratic relations in which Arnold and his writings often seemed wholly inconsequential. And this field, shaped by competing political interests and the available technologies for producing and transmitting knowledge, proved to be populated by a cast of charismatic figures and lowly functionaries who, working in and out of concert, invented the duties of government as they went along, endlessly establishing, following, and flaunting procedural regimes concocted on the fly.

To be confronted with how little I knew about the history and the mechanisms for disseminating mass education *was* embarrassing, and my failure even to consider these matters important to my study was a further sign of the "conceptual crudity," as Silver would put it (26), of my original approach to these materials. My plan, after all, had been simply to critique Arnold's ideological position and assume both that his position had shaped future practice in significant ways and that it had also reflected the sentiments of fellow travelers in his own time. But this tidy and manageable research project stayed tidy and manageable only so long as I steered clear of such thorny and ultimately inaccessible matters as the nature and constitution of the "student experience" in history. The unwelcome news about the material conditions of Arnold's life as a school inspector, however, propelled me into the murkier, messier regions beyond the well-charted waters of ideological critique. And, in turn, the sense of surprise and restriction that I felt in embarking on this new project became the means by which I was able to begin to historicize my own relationship to the material I was studying; it gave me a way, as Silver would put it, to think about my "blindness and its causes."

Thus, to know that Matthew Arnold was a poet, essayist, and social critic committed to promoting "the best that has been thought and said" and to know that he is now referred to regularly in discussions of canon reform is to be "culturally literate" about Arnold at this time. And, perhaps paradoxically, to know almost nothing about the advent of popular education in ei-

ther Britain or the United States during the nineteenth century is also a sign of one's cultural literacy, for at the present time the educational theories of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci are more likely to appear on graduate syllabi than are historical accounts of the bureaucratic maneuvers, legislative decisions, and individual initiatives that gave rise to the university. So what I knew and didn't know about Arnold reflected my own educational history, as did my expectations about what I thought the material I uncovered would reveal. Or, to put it another way, since my educational history is the result of my personal circulation to and engagement with a number of distinct and necessarily impersonal institutional locations, "my own" educational history is only partly mine.

With this insight in mind, I realized that I could use my own ignorance and expectations as signs of a state I shared with many others. This, in turn, enabled me to historicize the connections between what I knew and didn't know and the areas of thought I had and hadn't been introduced to in school, as well as the teachers, writers, and ideas that I had and hadn't been given access to throughout the educational system; the autodidactic pursuits that that system had and hadn't given rise to; and, most important, the ways I had and hadn't been taught to define, think about, and respond to ignorance. Once these connections had been elucidated, it became clear to me that my "surprised," "personal" reactions to the material were, in fact, trace elements of an historically produced, schooled response to the business of knowledge construction.[6]

Before I fill out this notion of "the schooled response," though, it may be best first to summarize my methodology. In seeking to offer an alternative approach for defining and studying what work it is that schools do and how that work might be reformed, I have chosen to focus on how the student has been figured both rhetorically and pedagogically by specific institutional practices within specific educational systems. In order to find evidence of the actual reading and writing students have been required to do within a given educational system, I turn to a set of archival materials less likely to be consulted in more traditional intellectual histories of the institution—textbooks and book collections produced by educators alongside their reforms, personal accounts of the educators' teaching practices, moments when educators quote students in their texts, and, in one case, course evaluations. By juxtaposing plans for reform with evidence of what a given reform looked like when implemented, my aim is to throw into high relief the dynamic interplay that exists between intellectual desires and bureaucratic realities, as all utopian aspirations encounter inescapable, historically produced material constraints.

What Can't Be Changed:
The Grammar and the Game of Educational Reform

Some will surely balk at my unqualified invocation of "bureaucratic realities" on the grounds that my approach transforms an accident of history into a transhistoric inevitability. And others may further adduce an essentially "conservative" bent to this enterprise, since I discount the possibility of fomenting a radical revision of the structure of the academy as we know it. I can only respond that my concern in what follows is not with assessing versions of what the academy *might* be if freed from its fetters to business, bureaucracy, a skeptical public, a declining tax base, an ambivalent student population. Though trafficking in such utopian visions is a time-honored academic pastime (one that, as we will see, serves the important institutional function of manifesting and securing the academic's mark of distinction as a moral figure), my interest here is with the academy as it is and has, in fact, been for some time—that is, as a bureaucratic institution for sifting, sorting, and credentialing the otherwise undifferentiated masses. Reseeing the educational enterprise through this lens makes it clear that any serious effort to reform the academy *must* work within the bureaucratic constraints that reign at the local and national levels. This argument may appear obvious enough—indeed, from a certain earthbound vantage point, it *is* obvious—but conceding the reality of academic working conditions is not so easy as it might at first seem, since it entails recognizing how much the purportedly opposed figures of "the intellectual" and "the bureaucrat" actually have in common. It also requires the admission that institutions of higher education are susceptible, at best, to modest rather than radical change and, furthermore, that when such change occurs, it will be slow, uneven, and with unpredictable consequences. Conceding the essentially bureaucratic nature of academic work demands, in other words, an acknowledgment that making hortatory declarations about what must be done and extended critiques of what has been done is not, by any stretch of the imagination, the same thing as engaging in the entirely unglamorous, often utterly anonymous work of figuring out what *can* be done within a given institutional context, where one is certain to run up against extant, competing, undoubtedly unreasonable, and unquestionably unfair constraints.

In their award-winning book *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, David Tyack and Larry Cuban use the phrase "the basic grammar of schooling" to describe the remarkable stability of educational institutions. As they define it, this grammar consists of "the ways that schools divide time and space, classify students and allocate them to class-

rooms, splinter knowledge into 'subjects,' and award grades and 'credits' as evidence of learning" (85). Tyack and Cuban recount numerous efforts to transform this basic instructional design; they chronicle, as well, the eventual failure of all attempts that sought to fundamentally alter either the organization of the schools or the delivery of education. Defining successful projects as those that lasted long enough "to register as institutional trends," Tyack and Cuban extracted the following attributes of sustainable reform efforts: the reforms could be added on to the existing structure without interfering with standard operating procedures; they were, as a rule, perceived to be noncontroversial by the public and by the larger governing bodies; they produced influential constituencies committed to their perpetuation (such as drivers' education in the high schools, which gained the support of insurance companies and car dealers); they were required by law and easily monitored; and, finally, they were implemented by school administrators and teachers rather than by outsiders (57–58). For those interested in radically reshaping educational practice in order to address the gross inequities in the extant system, these findings are bound to be disappointing, since they confirm the notion that the institution is fundamentally conservative and suggest the impossibility of "meaningful" change, however that might be construed.

Of course, educational systems do not actually have a "fundamental nature." Rather, they have assumed a historically produced character that manifests itself in our time as an immensely complex bureaucracy with an inherent resistance to structural change. The fact that there is no logical necessity to the system's procedures frequently becomes the occasion for educational reformers to argue that schools might, in fact, function quite differently—that schools could, for instance, be more collaborative, liberating, inclusive, efficient, and fair. To head down this road, however, is to mistake the relative arbitrariness of the form that the school currently has assumed as proof that any imaginable alternative form could be adopted at this historical moment. It is also to believe that the histories of all the students, employees, and administrators who have circulated through the current educational system are an insignificant detail—a minor impediment— standing in the way of radical change. But as Tyack and Cuban sagely observe, "rarely have start-from-scratch reformers with their prefabricated innovations really understood the tenacity of the grammar of schooling or the need to adapt change to local knowledge and needs" (132). The people outside the system trying to get in, the people already in the system, and the system itself, already so deeply ingrained in both groups: all of these "problems" inevitably make themselves known once a reform proposal is intro-

duced and they all work, in various ways, to ensure that managed change is never so rapid as it was planned to be, never so radical as it promised to be, and never so fully successful as on paper it seemed it would be. Thus, to produce plans for changing the schools that wish away these historically produced material constraints—including economic necessity, resident human capital, and extant institutional structures—is to reject from the outset learning how to speak using "the basic grammar of schooling" and to consign oneself to the Platonic exercise of building an ideal system in words.

In observing that such utopian exercises are regularly rehearsed without consequence, I do not mean to suggest that all one need do to bring one's plans for reforming the educational system to fruition is to become fluent in the "grammar of schooling." This is a seductive notion, one that is particularly appealing to those who think that all the world's a language and we but speakers who need only open our mouths and speak the truth to alter the workings of that world. Indeed, to think that learning the grammar of a culture alone makes change possible is to fall into the deepest and most capacious trap awaiting those who venture onto the field of pedagogical relations. That is, in imagining that under ideal circumstances, all one has to do is teach a given content in a certain way for "learning" to occur, one constructs "the student" once again as infinitely malleable, ready and able to take on a new grammar, a new way of thinking, a new consciousness if only the right information is made available in the right way. I term this error in thinking about the lived realities of the social sphere the *teacher's fallacy* because it imbues teachers with an almost magical power that, under the right conditions, can be unleashed to transform the objects of instruction into whatever the teacher pleases.

I discuss the tremendous and ultimately inescapable allure this particular fallacy has for teachers and cultural critics alike in Chapter 6; but for the moment, it is worth noting that Tyack and Cuban do not include as part of the grammar of schooling this captivating image of the teacher as an autonomous subject, uninterested in material rewards, selflessly committed to the spread of knowledge, fluent in the languages and mental procedures that set the mind free. I think this omission is unfortunate, for just as schools structure time and space in such uniform, predictable ways as to warrant being compared to a grammar, there can be no question that schools also attract followers to the profession through an equally uniform and predictable mechanism for allocating rewards and dividing the labor force. That is, the grammar of schooling must also include as one of its attributes a labor force drawn to a profession that promises to maintain a

sharp distinction between intellectual and bureaucratic work, teaching and management, freedom and servility. The "mind-set" of this labor force is no more amenable to radical reform than is the division of the school day or the awarding of grades as evidence of learning. To put it another way, any reform project that sets out to radically reorient the teachers' mind-set is bound to fail.

No one has done more to advance the understanding of how schools create and reward this intellectual revulsion for bureaucratic work than the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* is best read as Bourdieu's effort to expose the social mechanisms that infuse a taste for "legitimate culture" with value, thereby distinguishing it from tastes for other kinds of work and other kinds of cultural artifacts. Bourdieu is quick to declare his preliminary findings to be "self-evident," since most people, without doing any research at all, would say that the two most important factors influencing the level of taste an individual acquires are class of origin and level of education (99). Bourdieu's project, however, is to systematize the processes by which taste is either inherited from one's forebears or acquired through education. This, in turn, will allow him to track the "series of different *effects*" that acquiring an academic's tastes will have in the lived experience of individuals (22, original emphasis). Establishing an analogy between the market in taste and the economic market, Bourdieu argues that taste itself indicates the amount of "cultural capital" an individual has accrued: the more cultural capital an individual accumulates, the more likely that individual is to manifest a disdain for economic capital and for the concerns of the material world. Within such a cultural market, the surest way to make it known that one has attained the highest level of taste and, therefore, that one is an order of being quite distinct from those who possess greater economic wealth, political power, and social mobility is to openly declare and to ceaselessly manifest one's preference for the idols of culture—great literature, high art, avant-garde theater, antiques, the life of the mind, a freedom from constraint.

Because cultural capital circulates in this way, "it brings to those who have legitimate culture as a second nature [that is, those who have a 'natural' appreciation for 'the best that has been thought and said'] the supplementary profit of being seen (and seeing themselves) as perfectly disinterested, unblemished by any cynical or mercenary use of culture" (86). With respect to the highly educated, this means that they come to see themselves as being beyond the reach of politics and the bureaucratic world. For this reason, "culture" itself becomes, in Bourdieu's famous formulation, "the site, par excellence, of misrecognition," where the highly educated individual's appre-

ciation for "higher things," which actually results from a complex collusion of economic, historic, and social forces, is "misrecognized" as a sign of the individual's natural superiority over others.[7] Bourdieu goes on to elaborate:

> This means that the term "investment," for example, must be understood in the dual sense of economic investment—which it objectively always is, though misrecognized—and the sense of affective investment which it has in psychoanalysis, or, more exactly, in the sense of *illusio*, belief, an involvement in the game which produces the game. The art-lover knows no other guide than his love of art, and when he moves, as if by instinct, toward what is, at each moment, the thing to be loved, like some businessmen who make money even when they are not trying to, he is not pursuing a cynical calculation, but his own pleasure, the sincere enthusiasm which, in such matters, is one of the preconditions of successful investment. (86)

With this in mind, we can say that Bourdieu's analysis points to the impossibility of radically reforming any highly developed educational system, since that system will, of necessity, be predominantly inhabited by individuals who have profited from that system, who are invested in that system, and whose felt sense of distinction has been established and certified by that system. Furthermore, to follow out this train of thought, it would appear that no academic can escape the allure of this game, not even those overtly interested in fully democratizing current educational practice, since such activists implicitly believe that education is the preeminent site for organizing relationships between individuals. One could even argue that those driven to reform the academy are the ones most fully involved in "the game which produces the game," since such individuals aim to establish their own distinction from others by assuming the position of the oppositional critic and by teaching others to see what is often all too appropriately described as the reformer's "vision."

Given Bourdieu's insistence that the game of culture rests on a persistent act of misrecognition whereby culturally produced differences are felt internally as naturally realized matters of taste, it is not surprising that he is routinely labeled a fatalist.[8] Indeed, with respect to academic culture, his analysis would appear to suggest that intellectuals are not qualified to oversee academic reform, since they themselves are blind to their own conditions of possibility. For whether schooling is conceived of as constrained either by a grammar or by the rules of a game, the only option available to the participants, given these analogies, is conforming to expectations. In this maddening way, Bourdieu's work not only elucidates the structural tensions

within educational institutions between knowledge producers and knowledge managers, but it also anticipates how intellectuals, regardless of their political or disciplinary commitments, will respond to such an account of the game of culture. That is, Bourdieu knows only too well that one way we intellectuals manifest and misrecognize our economic and affective investment in our own cultural superiority is through ritualized public performances of our revulsion at the suggestion that our hard-earned insights into the ways of the world may not be our own at all.

Utopian Delusions and Bureaucratic Realities:
Bourdieu, Guillory, and the Sphere of Intellectual Autonomy

In an effort to counter the charge that his analysis leaves no room for meaningful intervention, Bourdieu has since set out his guidelines for reforming the academy. Specifically, in "The Corporatism of the Universal: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World," Bourdieu urges intellectuals "to work collectively towards the defense of their own interests and towards the means necessary for the protection of their autonomy" (103). For too long, Bourdieu asserts, intellectuals have been paralyzed by a "guilt complex" about the underprivileged, which has led them to forget "that the defense of the universal [the downtrodden] presupposes the defense of the defenders of the universal" (103). The intellectual's desire to participate in rational dialogue with other intellectuals has been further restricted by "the fact that the most autonomous practitioners are endlessly exposed to the disloyal competition of the most heteronomous [practitioners], who always manage to find a way to compensate for their weaknesses by appealing to outside powers" (104). To counter these forces, Bourdieu believes that intellectuals must unite to protect the autonomy of "the most autonomous" from further incursions by the state, from the arbitrary decisions of funding agencies, from "second-rate intellectuals," and from outside evaluation in general. The creation of an organization that has these objectives is desirable for two reasons. First, in this newly autonomous sphere of intellectual engagement, "competition...is [to be] organized in such a manner that no one can succeed over anyone else, except by means of better *arguments, reasonings,* and *demonstrations,* thereby advancing reason and truth" (104, original emphasis). Second, because such an organization would recognize that protecting the autonomy of intellectuals is a political cause of paramount importance, it would provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure that intellectuals from around the globe could be "mobilized against all attacks on the autonomy of the intellectual world, and especially against all forms of

cultural imperialism" (108–9, original emphasis). Thus, as Bourdieu would have it, it is in the self-interest of intellectuals to act collectively, not only to preserve their sphere of relative autonomy but also to create an even purer environment for the circulation of cultural capital.

In the new environment Bourdieu envisions, working conditions for intellectuals would be even more distinct from those under which others labor. This is a desirable outcome in itself, Bourdieu believes, because these secure working conditions would increase the intellectuals' "inclination to *assert* this independence by criticizing the powers that be . . . [and the] *symbolic effectiveness* of whatever political positions [the intellectuals] might take" (100, original emphasis). Ultimately, then, Bourdieu's plan for future action takes his findings about the social laws governing the construction of taste and the establishment of hierarchies within intellectual communities to their logical end point: to survive in these increasingly threatening times, intellectuals must work together to protect the sense of privilege that they have come to feel is rightfully and naturally theirs. Regardless of whether or not one finds this project to be distasteful, Bourdieu's own analysis of intellectual culture makes it clear that such collective action among intellectuals is unlikely, since establishing an organization for preserving and protecting this common interest in remaining disinterested requires "neutraliz[ing] the tendency inscribed in the very logic of the intellectual field toward division and particularism," a tendency that makes intellectuals "surely among the least adept when it comes to discovering common interests uniting them" (109). If the goal of establishing a space where intellectual work would be uncontaminated by bureaucratic realities, cultural constraints, and "second-rate" minds seems uninviting, perhaps even revolting, this may be because the articulation of such a goal foregrounds the self-interest of a cultural class whose prestige and position is founded on the very assumption of its own disinterestedness.

The shared distaste that intellectuals have for organizational work does not mean, of course, that it would be impossible for them to unite to protect their own interests. Rather, it means that for collective action to occur, intellectuals must become "disenchanted" with the alluring image of themselves as free-thinking individuals whose mental work escapes the logic of the marketplace. As the following passage attests, Bourdieu believes his "reflexive sociology" can be instrumental in relieving intellectuals of their self-deluding fantasies:

> I believe that sociology does exert a disenchanting effect, but this, in my eyes, marks a progress toward a form of scientific and political realism

that is the absolute antithesis of naive utopianism. Scientific knowledge allows us to locate real points of application for responsible action; it enables us to avoid struggling where there is no freedom—which is often an alibi of bad faith—in such a manner as to dodge sites of genuine responsibility.... The political task of social science is to stand up both against irresponsible voluntarism and fatalistic scientism, to help define a rational utopianism by using the knowledge of the probable to make the possible come true. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 196–97)

As Bourdieu knows, few intellectuals are likely to embrace the "rational utopianism" he proffers, partly because his project "does not look radical enough" for their tastes and partly because it lacks the aesthetic component so central to intellectual work (197). One could even say that Bourdieu has made a serious rhetorical miscalculation, since his decision to adopt the persona of the disenchanter transforms his highly educated audience into "the enchanted," few of whom are likely to be pleased at being so designated. For, as we can see, Bourdieu labels those who disagree with the fruits of his analysis as dupes of "naive utopianism," "irresponsible voluntarism," and "fatalistic scientism." In contrast, he characterizes his own unqualified belief in a "scientific knowledge" of the laws governing social action as paving the way to a "rational utopianism."

In sum, Bourdieu makes no rhetorical concessions to those who might be skeptical of his argument. Rather, buying into the *illusio* of the teacher's fallacy, he imagines all those who accept his position to have exercised their Reason and all those who reject his argument to be fools of the system—the truly "dominated dominators," those blind to the fact that "being in possession of one of the major means of domination, cultural capital, they partake of the dominant order" ("Corporatism" 109). And because he accepts the results of his research as revealing a set of historical—and therefore fundamental—truths about the organization of contemporary society, Bourdieu can't help but see his own responsibility to lie with disseminating these scientific results throughout the academic community, where, under ideal conditions, they would be dispassionately digested and evaluated. Thus, even though his own research suggests that it would be highly unlikely for his proposal to receive such a hearing, given intellectuals' profound investment in the game that both depicts them as and rewards them for appearing disinterested, Bourdieu himself must play by the rules of this game. Indeed, it would appear that he has no other option but to believe in the game's *illusio* and to be its puppet like everyone else. Consequently, he must eschew the arts of persuasion and all other discursive traits that might reveal a

weakness for anything other than Reason: he must "speak the truth," whatever the material consequences (which, of course, in his case are few); he must be an intellectual and not a bureaucrat; he must embrace the ideals of the former and flee everything the latter represents, including, paradoxically, the anonymity that comes from working in a larger collectivity.

Although he is indebted to Bourdieu's approach, John Guillory has developed an alternative reform proposal that is both more conservative and more rhetorically savvy than Bourdieu's. Guillory's specific concern in *Cultural Capital* is to address the failure of liberals to generate "an effective response to the conservative backlash" created by debates about multiculturalism and the teaching of noncanonical literature (4). Insisting that the revisionists have been fighting a losing battle, Guillory argues for the necessity of shifting attention away from the curriculum and onto "the school itself, which regulates access to literary production by regulating access to literacy, to the practices of reading and writing" (ix). It thus becomes possible "to repudiate the practice of fetishizing the curriculum, of locating the politics of pedagogy in the anxious drawing up of a list of representative names" (51). This, in turn, enables a "strategic" reformulation of the canon debate, as one abandons the argument that it is necessary to teach "noncanonical" works in order to represent social minorities, insisting instead "that the school has the social obligation of providing access to these works, *because they are important and significant cultural works*" (52, original emphasis). In this way, Guillory's awareness of how the canon debates have contributed to the erosion of academics' ability to appear as impartial arbiters of cultural disputes leads him to devise a rhetorical strategy for restoring academics to their former positions of power: first, declare everything that appears on the syllabus a valuable cultural commodity *in itself* and then, to fend off charges of elitism, declare a commitment to giving everyone access to these cultural treasures.

As we will see, there is a striking compatibility between Guillory's hypothesis "that a total democratization of access to cultural products would disarticulate the formation of cultural capital from the class structure and from the markets" (337) and the arguments made by those who formulated the Great Books movement beginning in the 1920s. But whatever rhetorical force may be gained by labeling one's own reforms "democratizing," it should be clear that for Guillory, as for Bourdieu, the ultimate goal is to establish an autonomous intellectual sphere exclusively under the control of disinterested cultural critics. Thus, universalizing access to cultural goods would, in Guillory's terms, enable "a vast enlargement of the field of aesthetic judgment," since the value of any cultural good would be assessed not

on the basis of its inaccessibility but on "aesthetic grounds" (339). This "democratizing" gesture would wrench control of the universities from the hands of those "technobureaucrats" who have found an institutional home in expanding composition programs where—however unlikely his claims may seem to those familiar with the field—Guillory informs us, students are taught "the speech of the professional-managerial classes, the administrators, and bureaucrats" (79).[9] By beating back these forces, Guillory believes it will also be possible to strike at the heart of the internal restrictions that constrain instructional freedom: such work is necessary, he insists, because "in the situation of the bureaucratized educational institution, pedagogic autonomy must defend itself against the heteronomous pressure of the *educational institution itself,* insofar as it bureaucratically administers pedagogy, and not only against the pressures that seek to constrain or determine pedagogy from outside the school" (252–53, original emphasis).

Ian Hunter describes rhetorical moves of this kind, where a purely educational space outside the reach of governmentality is understood to be the educator's ultimate desideratum, as the "practice of exemplary withdrawal or 'world flight' " (29). When intellectuals resort in argument to this gesture they are manifesting what Hunter elsewhere calls their "secular holiness" (167). We can see the traces of Guillory's "exemplary withdrawal" from the world of material concerns in his assertion that the academy controls access to "the means of literary production." If one deems the assigned texts in a literature course to be the academy's "cultural goods" and then thinks about the work that students are habitually asked to do with those goods, it seems an extraordinary stretch of the imagination to say that this process regulates access to "the means of literary production." Such an assertion presumes that access to literary production is granted only to those who have been taught to generate exegetical or critical essays on literary or critical texts. In any event, there is little historical evidence to suggest that English Studies has understood its mission to be preparing students to produce literature: to the contrary, a survey of course requirements for English majors around the country would show that the bulk of the undergraduate's writing experience is taken up with multiple-choice exams and the composition of short essays and longer research papers.

In short, Guillory has got it wrong. Because schools regulate the circulation of students and the credentialing process, what they actually control is access to the means of *critical* production. Guillory, for his part, would certainly acknowledge that this is what schools currently do. Indeed, he sees the increased emphasis on theoretical texts in the literary curriculum as the technobureaucrats' other line of attack. Guillory even goes so far as to claim

that the rise of theory must be seen as "a historically specific routinization effect," whereby a formulaic mode of reading—most notably de Manian deconstruction—is transmitted to graduate students, who, in turn, apply it throughout the literary curriculum (259). And what deconstruction has provided, particularly through Paul de Man's project of rhetorical reading, is "the means of transforming the method of reading into a rigorously iterable *technical* procedure" that, Guillory asserts, "directly incorporated into the protocols of rhetorical reading a mimesis of the technobureaucratic itself" (262, original emphasis).

For evidence of theory's dominion over the literary syllabus, Guillory need look no further than the final preserve of academic autonomy—the graduate seminar:

> We can emphasize, to begin with, that it is only in the graduate seminar that theory can emerge as such, as a distinctive "canon" of writers and texts. The institutional conditions for the emergence of literary theory are therefore related to the institutional distinction between the graduate and undergraduate levels of the educational system. The signal feature of that distinction will already have been apparent: the relatively greater autonomy of the graduate teacher, which is in turn the condition for the transferential cathexes necessary for the propagation of theory. The relative nondetermination of the graduate syllabus by any higher administrative power is the sine qua non of theory, and for that reason theory itself is the vehicle of a claim to autonomy; it is the discursive field in which that autonomy can be negotiated, even when it is negotiated ideologically, as the perennial theoretical problem of the relation between language and the agency of the subject. The development of theory was always premised on the inviolability of the graduate seminar, the site of an autonomy not possible at the undergraduate level, where the syllabus of literature was subject to much greater oversight. (261)

While Guillory himself is obviously indebted to theory for "refunctioning" the work of those at the highest levels of literary study, he nevertheless sees this transformation of the content of graduate education and the marginalization of the literary curriculum as evidence that the university is being molded "into the institution designed to produce a new class of technical/managerial specialists possessed of purely technical/managerial knowledge" (261). With the literary curriculum being attacked from below by composition and from above by theory, he concludes that the only safe haven for the literary is the graduate seminar itself. For here the small class size, the intimate surroundings, and the self-selecting student body provide

the harried graduate professor with some relief from the intrusions of "higher administrative powers" and the disciplinarily enforced constraints of teaching on the undergraduate level.

Of course, the relatively autonomous working conditions afforded by the graduate seminar are to be found only at the upper echelons of the academy: they certainly are nowhere in evidence in the pedagogical configurations more regularly produced by our systems of mass education, particularly in the "technobureaucratic" enclave of composition. In these places, the feelings students have for their teachers or for the assigned materials are quite unlike those at play in the dynamic that most interests Guillory, where there is a "love for what the master teaches, his 'teaching,' and beyond that...a love for the very texts the master loves" (182). And, as we will see in the concluding chapter, the pedagogical relationship Guillory deems necessary for "the propagation of theory" is even less likely to appear at the graduate level if one happens to be teaching a *required* course in composition studies. Yet however remote may be the world of pedagogical relations Guillory imagines, he persists in the hope that the rarefied conditions of educational exchange in the graduate seminar might be made to give way, as we've seen, to a system that allows for "a total democratization of access to cultural products" (337). In this utopian world, cultural capital would not disappear—a disastrous result that would rob intellectuals of their hard-earned prestige. Rather, at some future moment, everyone will be able to get in on the game, thereby producing "a vast enlargement of the field of aesthetic judgment" (339) and, one must assume, a new domain for first-rate intellectuals to exercise their influence.

The Twilight of Professional Purity: The Intellectual, the Bureaucrat, and the Undergraduate Curriculum

As Bourdieu and Guillory build their alternative worlds in words, there can be little question that both educators are reacting to the fact that we are now working in the twilight of the academic profession.[10] And it should be clear as well that both Bourdieu and Guillory advocate plans that are essentially thinly veiled reaction formations designed to protect and preserve the "relatively autonomous" intellectual sphere. Though they cover their acts of "world flight" with arguments about a deeper engagement in the political sphere (Guillory even says, at one point, that his approach to the canon debates may help "to bring the imaginary itself under more strategic political control" [37]), they can't escape the debilitating plight of being trapped in a

prestige-based economy, where one's failure to effect change can be misrecognized as the successful adoption of a principled position. As the following chapters will show in some detail, however, there is a way out of this self-induced powerlessness. Specifically, the historicizing of actual educational practices provides ample evidence that sustainable reform occurs when educators move toward rather than flee from the world of bureaucratic demands that structure academic life. As we will see, no one involved in the reform efforts discussed here completely escaped the gravitational pull of what Hunter terms "intellectual fanaticism" (133) — that way of thinking that captures all of us who work in the academy, tempting us to believe that the material world can be changed through rational argument alone, drawing us deeper into the teacher's fallacy. Nor, for that matter, did any of these reformers manage to engage with the extant mechanisms for delivering education *without* compromising their original goals. It is for precisely this reason that each of these reform efforts warrants our attention, for taken together they allow us to see how any plan meant to have a direct and measurable effect on the institutional practices that govern what constitutes "higher" education and who will be given access to that education is inevitably altered during the implementation phase. Thus, unlike the utopian visions of educational reform alluded to above, the reform efforts I discuss had no alternative but to engage in what I have come to call "a politics of impurity."[11]

Lest embracing a politics of impurity sound grander and more heroic than it, in fact, is, we might usefully recall Evan Watkins's argument in *Work Time: English Departments and the Circulation of Cultural Value*, where Watkins offers irrefutable evidence that academics are necessarily deeply mired in and complicit with the massive bureaucratic machinery of higher education. As he puts it, "nobody becomes an English professor in order to grade papers, write committee meeting minutes and letters of recommendation, or argue with the dean about the need for a Xerox machine in the departmental office," but the the vast majority of one's "work time" in the academy is taken up with these very activities, rather than in "documenting the frontier myths informing *The Great Gatsby*" or some other such project that one was ostensibly trained to pursue (1). To illustrate this point, Watkins describes completing a form surveying how faculty spent their time during the previous quarter, a task he discovered he could perform "with depressing ease":

> I taught two undergraduate classes, requiring then two sets of decisions about what texts to order, what to read, what written work to assign. I read 211 student papers from those classes, assigning a grade to each one and a final grade to each of the total of 64 students who finished the

quarter. I directed 2 graduate students in independent reading courses, helped write and evaluate 9 Ph.D. examinations, and directed 1 M.A. thesis. I wrote 18 letters of recommendation for students, to various ends, and 2 letters of recommendation for faculty. I read and wrote evaluations of 2 essays submitted to journals for publication. (81)

Watkins's list continues, but this much of it is sufficient to illustrate his point that the profession looks different depending on whether one focuses on the content of graduate education or the content of its members' work time. This does not prove—nor does Watkins intend to imply—that the intensive training graduate students receive in preparation for a kind of intellectual labor that will never occupy a central place in their actual "work time" is utterly without meaning. To the contrary, he insists, such training in literary criticism and critical theory is preeminently important precisely because "theory recruits a labor force into English" (8).

Building on the notion that theory's job is to attract future laborers to the profession, Watkins explains this mismatch between the intellectual and bureaucratic demands placed on those who work in the academy: "English as a university discipline always foregrounds theory in one way or another, under whatever name, because it is always in the business of recruiting. As a discipline, however, it recruits a labor force for English *departments*, whose social functions and educational importance were not determined on the basis of recruiting promises. Nor can they be changed simply by rethinking the discipline" (9, original emphasis). Or, to put this somewhat differently, it is no accident that those recruited to study at the highest levels of the academy are regularly trained to do a kind of intellectual work that will consume little of their time in their future places of employment—if, that is, they are lucky enough to land a job. The suppression of this disjunction between the intellectual promise and the bureaucratic realities of work in higher education is simply a marketing strategy. Clearly, those attracted by this ploy are more likely than not to share the intellectual's visceral distaste for life in a bureaucracy and to see an academic career as providing the promise of at least momentary freedom from the constraints of the material world. Indeed, announcing one's utter disregard for what the job market portends and refusing to confront the consequences of going into considerable debt to finance one's education are only the most obvious ways to demonstrate that one is an ideal recruit, too given to the pleasures of the mind to care what deprivations might await the body. By the time these initiates are ready to enter the job market and find themselves competing for jobs that regularly require teaching composition and entry-level survey

courses, the problem is out of everyone's hands: the recruit is usually too deep in the system to tunnel out; the sympathetic recruiters who helped train the graduate student regret that they have no control over the market; and the new employers explain that the content of the teaching load at their institutions is based not on the training the recruit received elsewhere, but on the needs of the resident student population.

If it is fair to say that English Studies attracts people to the profession by suppressing its own conditions of possibility, it does so for the very good reason that teaching undergraduates, working in composition, and being a bureaucratic functionary have all come to circulate as synonyms for disreputable work. All of these activities pose a threat to the notion that employment at the highest levels of the academy leads to a life of relative autonomy. In fact, the common assumption is that such work is "better suited" to teaching assistants, part-time lecturers, and second-rate minds—the bottom feeders in the intellectual food chain. By speaking this open secret aloud, Watkins's intent is not to heighten the resident antagonisms that exist between "teachers" and "scholars," "bureaucrats" and "deep thinkers." To the contrary, his argument robs the accusation that one is a bureaucrat of its power. Watkins illustrates this point by drawing a distinction between the concrete labor that students perform in a specific course and the "abstract labor" that circulates from that course once the work has been completed. As he put it, when teaching a course,

> You don't report to the registrar that *Paradise Lost* is a revolutionary fusion of contradictory ethical claims, or even that John has a remarkable grasp of English history for a sophomore. You report that 60239 got a 3.8 in Engl 322, which in turn, in a couple of years, is then circulated to the personnel office at Boeing as 60239's prospective employer. There's a chance the workers in the personnel office at Boeing will hear something from 60239 about the fusion of ethical claims in *Paradise Lost*, but not a very good one. (18)

Given the shared bureaucratic and administrative structure of nearly every educational organization in this country, this is what all teachers do, regardless of discipline or position in the academic hierarchy: they produce and put into circulation evaluations; they solicit, assess, and respond to student work; they perform the bureaucratic function of sifting and sorting individuals.

Obviously, there are ways to reduce being directly implicated in this bureaucratic process whereby the unique character of any specific classroom practice is erased and transformed into a homogenous experience equiva-

lent to any other course in any discipline with any instructor. One can seek out lighter teaching loads with smaller classes; with the acquisition of seniority, one can further insist on teaching only electives at the upper levels. Under "ideal" circumstances, one can make oneself available only to graduate students. Certainly, those "fortunate" enough to attain this level of distinction experience a greater sense of relative autonomy than those placed elsewhere in the system; indeed, as Guillory's discussion of the erotics of de Man's seminar suggests, it may even be the case that those who work under such conditions enjoy a learning environment where casting the teacher as a "master" and analyzing the pedagogical relations in terms of "love" might be of some use analytically. Whatever opportunities seminars of this kind may provide, though, the availability of such working conditions is steadily declining and the gap between the unfettered life of the intellectual and the beleaguered life of the bureaucrat is shrinking to the point that, as we have seen above, even the best and the brightest in the profession have begun to sense that the academy is changing. Of course, for those in the academy who have never enjoyed the now-disappearing privileges and for those who never fully bought into the logic of the game of the academy's monopoly of the circulation of cultural capital, the call from on high to band together to defend the institution against the "sudden" encroachment of arbitrary methods for managing human capital is bound to produce a range of conflicting responses. Socrates may have been willing to drink the hemlock, but nearly everyone who has followed after him has opted to comply with the broad demands of systems of domination.

In *Rethinking the School,* Ian Hunter provides the historical background and the theoretical framework necessary for making sense of our view of the academic and the bureaucratic spheres as both fully enmeshed and fully incommensurate. Hunter turns to the historical record to make the argument — shocking in this context — that the bureaucratized educational system embodies "one of the central ethical and political achievements of the administrative state" (xxii). This is so, he maintains, because the educational system is an unprincipled, hybridized institution that has succeeded in separating the state's business of training citizens from the religious interest in managing the development of an individual's inner life and conscience. By way of explaining this almost unthinkable notion that a school system administered by unprincipled bureaucrats is superior to one under the control of highly principled intellectuals, Hunter insists that

> The ethical attributes of the good bureaucrat — strict adherence to procedure, acceptance of sub- and super-ordination, esprit de corps, abne-

gation of personal moral enthusiasms, commitment to the purposes of the office—are not an incompetent substraction from a "complete" (self-concerned and self-realizing) comportment of the person. On the contrary, they are a positive moral achievement requiring the mastery of a difficult ethical milieu and practice. They are the product of definite ethical techniques and routines—"declaring" one's personal interest, developing professional relations with one's colleagues, subordinating one's ego to procedural decision-making—through which individuals develop the disposition and ability to conduct themselves according to the ethos of bureaucratic office. (156–57)

And what "good bureaucrats" have done historically, according to Hunter, is to assist in the creation of a similarly hybridized school system, one that uses a pastoral model of pedagogical practice, defanged of its religious fervor, to meet the government's need for an educated citizenry. Thus, in place of an idealized instructional scene, where the teacher is the shepherd tending with loving care to the flock, Hunter bids us to see the material advantages of placing the bureaucrat between the figure of the teacher, as self-reflective moral subject, and the students, as citizens-in-the-making. With the classroom roles redefined in this way, the teacher's genealogical relationship to the pastor is found to reveal itself in an overriding inclination toward "intellectual fundamentalism," which insists on seeing schools "as the expression of a coherent set of ethical or political principles." This fanaticism does not pose the threat that it has in religious institutions, however, partly because the historic achievement of the bureaucratic system of education is its "unprincipled coherence," which allows it to resist dogmatic idealisms in favor of creating "a new horizon for political action and reflection: the optimal management of mundane social and economic life" (89–91).

Hunter's celebration of an administered state is bound to appear woefully out of step at a historical moment ruled by the Foucauldian critique of disciplinarity. Hunter is not, however, ignorant of Michel Foucault's observations. Rather he would have us see that

It was the administrative state that created a non-violent, tolerant, and pragmatic sphere of political deliberation, by forcefully separating the public comportment of the citizen from the private persona of the man of conscience, and by subordinating spiritual absolutes to governmental objectives. Perhaps the foremost instrument and effect of this historic development was the education "bureau," through which states concep-

tualized and organized that massive and ongoing program of pacifica-
tion, discipline, and training responsible for the political and social ca-
pacities of the modern citizen. (60)

One way that the administered state established this "pragmatic sphere of
political deliberation" was by developing "new political and intellectual
technologies of government... [that] allowed the life and labor of national
populations to be known in a form that opened them to political calcula-
tion and administrative intervention" (47). And what this involved, specifi-
cally, was the creation of mechanisms for collecting and assessing statistical
data on the population, exposing problems that were then understood to be
susceptible to governmental management. As evidence of the beneficial side
of the government's intrusion into the private lives of its citizens, Hunter
turns to what can only seem, at first glance, to be the most ludicrous of ex-
amples—the creation and implementation of "intelligence testing." These
tests, he insists, "played a key role in changing ability from something that
government should recognize and reward into something that it could
form and distribute, for its own ends" (121). That is, over against the designs
of those who would restrict access to the intellectual sphere to those ex-
hibiting, say, an ineffable "quality of mind," the government's reconfigura-
tion of "ability," "intelligence," or "smarts" as a statistically measurable at-
tribute needs to be seen as a significant advance precisely because the data
produced by this reconfiguration has subsequently provided the material
for de-naturalizing academic success. With such statistics, it becomes possi-
ble, for instance, to correlate test scores with race, class, and gender and to
use such information to build a case for the necessity of legislative inter-
vention to ensure that equal educational opportunities are made available
to all citizens. The statistical assessments, in other words, *can* be used to give
body to abstractions about restricted access to cultural capital, thereby
making visible the need to address the system's manifest injustices with
specific structural adjustments—such as increased spending, additional
support services, curricular reforms to improve performance.[12]

Obviously, such statistical information can also be used in the service of
promoting even greater social injustice. Indeed, the discussion of Matthew
Arnold's tenure as an inspector of schools in the next chapter shows how
the government's overarching interest in measurable results can shape in
ways that are far from ideal the work students must do. Granting the point
that statistical evidence can be used for good or ill, Hunter points out that
critical intellectuals have been too quick to judge empirical evidence of the
system's failure to deliver the same educational product to all as yet one

more sign of the moral and ethical weakness of the bureaucrats who have rigged the system to preserve their own privilege. He insists that the statistics drawn from "intelligence testing" must be read differently:

> Critique distinguishes itself, and its exponents, only through the hypermoral reinterpretation of the figures as measures of the gap between class difference and moral equality. In thus presuming to judge the ethics of social governance by the standards of personal conscience, this gesture runs the risk of intellectual fanaticism. For what the figures in fact measure is the gap between class differences and an optimal social training and utilization of the population, the "talent reserve." It was this gap—opened by government itself as the means of problematizing the divided school system—that first made educational equality into a governmental objective and that fuelled the drive for comprehensive schooling. (133)

It is easy enough to imagine this claim being greeted with a cascade of catcalls, followed by the usual litany of accusations that accompany the articulation of such an impure position: without even reading *Rethinking the School*—and indeed, if Hunter is right, some intellectuals would refuse to read his book on principle—there will be those who, on the basis of my summary alone, will find cause to dismiss Hunter as a dupe of the ideological state apparatus, someone willfully blind to the role education has played in promoting social injustice.

While this line of response is predictable, it is also unwarranted, for Hunter presents his argument in hopes of providing intellectuals with a more useful way to think about how school reform might be tailored to combat social injustice. His goal is to develop a more successful set of strategies for approaching the ever-receding objective of educational equality. Thus, by arguing that the critical intellectual and all others who see themselves as self-realizing individuals can "claim no absolute ethical privilege" over any other entity produced by the administrative state—"the statesman, the bureaucrat, the jurist, the citizen"—Hunter's aim is not to justify the status quo but rather to lay the groundwork necessary for retheorizing what work it is that schools do and what work they can be made to do, given reigning social, political, historical, and economic constraints (36). In order to advance this project, Hunter argues,

> [Intellectuals] must give up "principled" critique and develop a far more pluralistic and supple bearing toward the ethical and organizational reality of the school system. Instead of holding it accountable to a single

ideal of the person we must learn to respect the restraints imposed on our intellectual conduct and, more importantly, on our conduct as intellectuals, by the plural assemblage of persons, disciplines, conducts and objectives that comprises the school system. (164–65)

It is in this spirit that the following analyses of particular reform efforts have been written. And, because they are the result of the deliberative approach I have outlined here, these case studies in the history of educational reform confirm Hunter's sense that there's little reason to believe individual institutions act like reasoned individuals or that such institutions respond to critiques made by those whose work they oversee and authorize.

Agents of Change:
Improvising the Hybrid Persona of the Intellectual-Bureaucrat

Like Hunter, I too hope that reflecting on the largely ineffectual role intellectuals have played in the history of educational reform will help us "to improvise a more sober and supple intellectual persona" than those seen to be available to us now (176), but I'm much less sanguine than he about the likelihood that "in obedience to its own governmental ethic, the school system would eventually itself give rise to a form of equality" (103). Bureaucracies are certainly good at generating data, producing information about the social world on a scale that no individual or team of individuals could ever approach. Even so, there is little evidence to support the idea that bureaucracies are driven by some internal compulsion to interpret the collected data in ways that *effectively* result in a more egalitarian distribution of educational and employment possibilities. Furthermore, when Hunter asserts that the bureaucrat and the critical intellectual "represent different stations in ethical life" and therefore "give rise to comportments of the person that are non-transferable," he leaves the impression that there is little the intellectual can do to assist the bureaucratic system in moving toward "a form of equality" (164). As the following cases make clear, there is, in fact, a good deal that can and has been done to improvise a "more sober and supple intellectual persona." To varying degrees, the reformers discussed here succeeded in fabricating the persona of that hybrid figure — the intellectual-bureaucrat — that Hunter only briefly entertains as an available option. For despite their different ways and different motivations, each of these reformers sought to harness the energy of the critical impulse to engage effectively with the bureaucratic realities that govern what can occur in the classroom.

Having invoked the intellectual-bureaucrat, I must underscore that the work lying ahead for those committed to educational reform will require *improvising* this persona under conditions of considerable constraint. For evidence of these constraints, we need look no further than the numerous ways in which my own argument has ensnared me in the very activities I have been at such pains to critique. Indeed, the very fact that I have engaged at such length in *critiquing* the critique of educational practice squarely places me in the ranks of those same self-reflexive theoreticians whose work I have criticized for endlessly deferring constructive action. One of the constraining conditions of academic life, though, is that in order to be heard, one must first establish a familiarity with, if not a mastery of, the institution's authenticating practices. This particular conflict between the form and the content of my argument may be explained away as an institutional inevitability; but the other contradictions that have made themselves felt over the course of my exposition may seem less the necessary responses to extant constraints than the traces of a second-rate mind betraying its limitations. Thus, if I may be said to have improvised a persona in all this, to some it may seem that I have produced little more than a series of dissonances: the critic of critique, the intellectual writing in defense of the bureaucrat (or perhaps the bureaucrat who dreams of being an intellectual), the teacher using the student to show how other teachers have used the student, the pure practitioner of a politics of impurity.

I do not seek to evade such charges; indeed, my being caught up in these contradictions points very clearly to what it means to say that we always are working within constraints. Though the ivory tower is an omnipresent image of academic freedom, among other things, those involved in the business of education are well aware that all academic work actually occurs under conditions that circumscribe what statements may be made as well as how and where those statements may be made. The processes of peer review, tenure, and promotion are only the most overt examples of the operative mechanisms of constraint in this sphere; recalling Bourdieu's work, we note that these constraints are also internalized and experienced as freely elected choices by the highly educated. In addition to these evaluative mechanisms, which exercise an array of material, conceptual, and experiential constraints on all members of the academic community, the form and content of discussions about educational reform are also regulated. These specific discursive constraints include dominant representations of teachers and students, the scene of instruction, and the educational process itself, as well as the shared assumption that the educational enterprise stands in opposition to business concerns and bureaucratic organization.

There is no escaping this array of constraints, no argument that will allow one to elude their grasp, no way of speaking or writing that can fully succeed at suppressing their contradictory force or their contaminating presence. If the by now tiresome exercise of pure deconstruction has taught us anything, it should be this. But to acknowledge that one's words and actions are constrained need not be a prelude, as it so often is, to yet another utopian vision where no such constraints operate and the free market for the circulation of cultural capital reigns supreme. Rather, recognizing the inescapability of these constraining conditions at this historical moment may well be the necessary first step toward a fuller engagement with the extant social sphere. For the figures who populate the pages that follow, this engagement has taken the form of improvising educational possibilities out of the restricted materials available, plunging into the impure business of building a functioning alternative to current educational practice, and working with and against the waves of internal and external resistance to change. In other words, these figures have done what Bourdieu has taught us intellectuals can see only as the "dirty" work of education—work that academics in particular have been happy enough, more often than not, to leave to a different order of being.

Ironically, perhaps, I was initially brought to pursue this study by my own dissatisfaction with the general current of the academic debate about multiculturalism, because the debate never seemed to get around to addressing the consequences of past and current academic practices that established and then hierarchized categorical and essential differences between peoples—to examining the academic assessment practices that marked certain peoples and certain acts of literary production as "dirty." Thus, in setting out to explore previous efforts to reform the academy, I wanted to gain a better understanding of how actual changes in the material practices of the educational system were realized; I wanted, in effect, some guidelines for how to move our discussions about difference forward so that they would provide pedagogical approaches and institutional environments that might be more responsive to the diverse histories our students bring with them into the classroom. For these reasons, I selected touchstones in the debate about multiculturalism, hoping to historicize the institutional practices that have served to naturalize cultural differences. But I also wanted to study those institutional practices that have attempted to recognize and accommodate differential ways of knowing by problematizing transhistorical differences—those approaches grounded in noncanonical cultural artifacts and practices as well as those that draw on ways of using language that stand outside the mainstream. Thus, one way to

understand this book's organizational principle is to see it as exploring two "elitist" points of reference in the debate about multiculturalism—Matthew Arnold and the Great Books approach—and two "progressive" points of reference—British cultural studies and the introduction of ethnographic approaches into the curriculum.

As the individual analyses unfold, however, it will become clear that those preliminary labels, which accurately depict current understandings of the implicit political agendas of these projects, are of little descriptive or analytical value when applied to moments of actual educational practice. Indeed, the deliberative approach employed throughout the chapters that follow works to detail as fully as possible what Hunter calls "the plural assemblage of persons, disciplines, conducts and objectives that comprises the school system" (165). For this reason, I focus less on the fugitive ideological interests roiling beneath the educational rhetoric of the reformers than on the material practices and consequences that have followed, often quite unexpectedly, from particular efforts to institutionalize reform. In this way, the process of educational reform is cast as ever an uncertain project, one that involves anticipating the constraining forces that constantly threaten the possibilities of educational innovation and responding to the inevitably unforeseen contingencies, resistances, and outright ruptures that follow a plan once it is put into practice.

What I hope to show as being true of the process of educational reform is also true of the process of studying the process of educational reform, since my selection of cases occurred within a similarly constrained field of choice. That is, to do historical research on educational practice, one must rely on what the archive has preserved, and this reliance itself is quite constraining—particularly if one's interest lies with student work, which the academy endlessly produces and endlessly discards. The cases I examine here "paid off" as research sites because the archive could be made to release considerable amounts of previously untapped information about these curricular innovations: parliamentary records contain reams of testimony concerning the British government's reluctant venture into popular education; much of the discussion about the issues pertaining to the creation of the Great Books curriculum preceded the spread of the telephone and so is preserved in detailed correspondence among the founders; the initial effort to bring cultural studies to the masses circulated through the Open University's distance learning apparatus, which left behind mass-produced pedagogical materials and, by chance, a record of how students evaluated the work; and, finally, the sole extended ethnographic study that seeks to capture the whole of undergraduate life, Michael Moffat's *Coming of Age in*

New Jersey, concerns students from my own university. One always studies what one can, shaping a project in response to what can be found, what can be reasonably argued, and what can be accomplished in the allotted time, then covering one's tracks to make the absences, gaps, and shortcomings either disappear or seem a matter of principle.

In this instance, the absences, gaps, and shortcomings in our knowledge about how the student has figured in and been figured by educational reform is intimately related to institutional decisions about what educational materials warrant preservation. One virtue of pursuing research on the history of educational reform, though, is that whatever the library has on the subject is almost certain to be on the shelf—the availability of the desired reference matter being a concrete manifestation of what isn't now circulating as cultural capital. Even so, ready access to the small body of relevant materials doesn't make up for the absence of representative bodies of student work completed within any of the educational systems I study here. One may well ask, Why on earth should that material have been preserved? It is a reasonable question. But the apparent absurdity of proposing that student work be preserved may be another trace of the belief that "the student" functions as a transhistorical subject whose work remains everywhere and in every way the same. That is, such a question may just be another way of saying that student work warrants as little attention as one can get away giving it.

That my study has been cobbled together from within this field of material constraint, where I have resorted to any number of strategies for reading along the margins of official documents, textbooks, and teacher accounts to tease out the historical fragments of the figure of the student, doesn't explain my failure to consider those two movements that have clearly had the most to do with placing the debate about multiculturalism in the national spotlight: women's studies and African American studies. It would be a mistake to read their absence from my book as indicating my lack of interest in these areas or in the curricular and pedagogical initiatives they have given rise to, just as it would be an error to construe the presence of any of the areas covered in the chapters that follow as indicating my implicit commitments. To the contrary, efforts to make academic practice more responsive to the needs, concerns, and achievements of women, African Americans, other racial and ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups are never far from my analysis of the reform approaches discussed here.

My commitment to improving both access to and the content of higher education does not manifest itself, however, in the form of an ongoing assessment of each program in terms of the degree to which women or other marginalized groups are represented on that program's curriculum. Rather,

my concern with making the academy a more hospitable environment for all those disenfranchised by the current system for disseminating cultural capital is expressed in my attention to the profound material consequences that regularly result from constructing reform movements on the back of an idealized student who, more often than not, is understood to be entirely free of cultural commitments, fully deracinated, infinitely malleable, and absolutely receptive to any and all reform objectives. By "thinking with students," I draw attention to the ways that specific assumptions about race, class, and gender construct specific learning subjects. Woven into the very fabric of my methodology, then, is an array of questions that serve to reveal how "the student" has been gendered female within the institutional space of the academy; one consequence of this gendering has been the designation of resistance to pedagogical practice as evidence of the student's unreason, while compliance is understood to reveal fertile possibilities for the social reproduction of the institution.

This approach also makes it clear that those truly committed to increasing access to all the academy has to offer must assume a more central role in the bureaucratic management of the academy. For, as I argue in my final chapter, it is at the microbureaucratic level of local praxis that one can begin to exercise a material influence not only on how students are represented or on which books will be a part of the required reading lists but also, and much more important, on which individuals are given a chance to become students and on whether the academy can be made to function as a responsive, hospitable environment for all who work within its confines. This is a modest enough goal, but it is firmly grounded in the belief that what we do as teachers and intellectuals does matter and that this work matters most immediately and significantly within our local institutional contexts. In other words, it is just the kind of goal that Tyack and Cuban might approvingly characterize as tinkering toward utopia: it concedes the existence of a grammar of schooling and bids those of us who know the most about the daily practice of education to speak using this grammar, to recognize the weight of historical constraint, and to engage with the bureaucratic systems that makes academic work possible. By pursuing this goal, we may find it possible to begin to change what it means to "succeed" in the academy and to provide greater access to such success. It may also allow those of us who are in the business of education to begin to exercise some small measure of control over the circumstances, conditions, and content of our employment. And this, in itself, as the following chapters illustrate in quite different ways, can be the first step toward actually experiencing and thereby preserving the "relative autonomy" that academic work can, indeed, be made to provide.