6 The Stories That Teach Us

If Julius Getman's progress through the academy were made into a movie, the music would begin to swell just as he was introduced to the Yale Law School alumni. The movie would have already detailed Getman's struggles as the son of working-class immigrants, including his attendance at City College in the early fifties because it was all his parents could afford. It would have followed Getman on to Harvard Law School, shown us his initial difficulties on the job market, and traced his steady rise from his first appointment to the faculty at Indiana University, then to Stanford, and finally to the lofty heights of Yale Law School. At this point, a few choice words about hard work, determination, sacrifice, and success would be heard above the roar of flashbulbs. And then, the credits would roll. With no more mountains for Getman to climb, the story (and his life) would, for all practical purposes, be over: all that remains is to continue writing oft-cited, well-received articles for an ever-increasing audience of admiring peers, on into retirement.

What is surprising about Getman's book *In the Company of Scholars: The Struggle for the Soul of Higher Education* is its refusal to tell this familiar story of the American Dream realized, beginning instead just where "the movie version" of the author's academic career would end—with Getman's decision to join the faculty at Yale. For Getman, the story of his life *begins* rather than ends at this point because his return to the Ivy Leagues as a distinguished professor marked the dawning of his awareness of just how completely he had misunderstood the bureaucratic realities of academic work. Thus, *In the Company of Scholars* represents Getman's efforts to interrogate his own assumptions about the consequences of academic success: as he puts it, "I began this book to articulate my sense of disappointment and alienation from the status I had fought so hard to achieve." Ac-

knowledging that initially he had been swept away by his improbable jour-
ney "from a run-of-the-mill teaching position to a unanimous offer to join
the faculty at one of the two great law schools in America," Getman con-
fesses that it wasn't long before he "became uneasy with the Yale Law
School, critical of its scholarship, and troubled by its smugness" (1–2). In-
stead of entering into a world of selfless teachers and committed students
churning with intellectual energy, as he had expected, he found a commu-
nity composed of professional academics who were careerist, self-centered,
uninterested in teaching, intolerant, ill-informed, opportunistic, absent.

Realizing that *even Yale* could not place him "in the company of schol-
ars" forced Getman to reassess the meaning of his academic success. Indeed,
upon reflection, Getman was surprised to discover that *forty years* after his
graduation from Harvard Law School, he was still "appalled and angry" at
his distinguished alma mater for a host of shortcomings, including "its ar-
rogant assumption of intellectual superiority; its social, intellectual, and
professional rating systems; its limited focus; its overemphasis on profes-
sional competence; its failure to provide an opportunity to express other as-
pects of our intellectual ability, such as creativity, empathy, and under-
standing; and most of all its presumption in setting intellectual limits for
people prematurely" (13). With such recollections at the forefront of his
mind, Getman commences an examination of what happens to those who
have been similarly swept away by stories about the virtues of education's
transformative powers only to find themselves, as Richard Hoggart detailed
so long ago in *The Uses of Literacy*, the inheritors of a lifelong sense of root-
lessness.

It is difficult not to dismiss this familiar criticism of the academy's ways
as a kind of infantile complaint—as the yawpings of some wounded inner
scholar who dreams of working conditions that promote an otherworldly
communion of intellectuals. Certainly, it is odd that Getman, a specialist in
labor law and a former general counsel for the American Association of
University Professors, could have gotten so far in the profession without
discovering that academic labor—with its rigid hierarchies, its elaborate
protocols for proper behavior, its restrictive codes of communication, and
its relative intolerance and unresponsiveness to difference—can be as
alienating as any other form of labor. Nevertheless, to read Getman's dissat-
isfaction with academic life as evidence of mental weakness or intellectual
blindness is to misunderstand how the academy attracts to itself those who
imagine it to provide a relatively autonomous work site that is *supposed* to
be beyond the reach of everyday concerns and everyday people. One might
think that those attracted by this image would recognize its illusory charac-

ter once they had been exposed to the bureaucratic realities of academic life. The truth, though, is that such exposure to the daily demands of soliciting, assessing, and ordering untold masses of student work only reinforces the general belief that there *must* be other, less constraining situations where *true* scholars and intellectuals are free to do as they please, untrammeled by bureaucratic responsibilities and the burden of grading student papers. In this respect, *In the Company of Scholars* is best read as evidence of just how difficult it is for those who have been highly rewarded by the academic system to come to terms with the essentially bureaucratic nature of the work that awaits them after all their years of laboring to please their superiors. Thus, we find Getman dreaming of himself as engaged in "the struggle for the soul of higher education" instead of seeing himself as what he is—one of a mass of intellectual laborers employed by an essentially soulless social mechanism whose primary function is to create, reinforce, and problematize hierarchical relations among an otherwise undifferentiated citizenry.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott makes the provocative suggestion that if such a thing as "false consciousness" may be said to exist, it is to be found not among the disenfranchised, as theories of dominant ideology would have one believe, but among those who have risen through the educational system and have come to believe deeply in its values. When Scott describes this latter group of dominated dominators as having "made sacrifices of self-discipline and control and developed expectations that were usually betrayed," he intimates how wrenching the educational experience can be for those who have come to believe in the academy's promise of mental improvement, social advancement, and cultural and moral superiority (107). For our purposes, Getman perfectly illustrates Scott's hypothesis. By his own account, "like most academics," he believed that the profession would "offer meaning, status, and a pleasant life-style" (2). He persisted in this belief even though his own experiences in graduate school required him to radically reorient his relationship to the social sphere. As Getman puts it, during this time, "I was being transformed in my thinking, speech, and manner from a person whose immigrant, working-class background was obvious into one worthy of mingling with the country's professional, intellectual, political, and social elite" (10). Though at one time Getman had an unwavering faith that it was worth the personal cost of undergoing such a transformation, by the time he is well into his career his faith in the educational process has been replaced, just as Scott would predict, by a profound sense of betrayal. Thus, in return for all his years of diligent study and subservience, Getman finds he is not the inheritor of "mean-

ing, status, and a pleasant life-style," as he had expected; he is just another functionary within a largely indifferent bureaucratic system.

That Scott would have anticipated this course of events doesn't mean that he thinks that such feelings of anger and betrayal are insignificant. In fact, at one moment in his argument, he entertains the possibility that "the system may have most to fear from those subordinates among whom the institutions of hegemony have been most successful. The disillusioned mission boy (Caliban) is always a graver threat to an established religion than the pagans who were never taken in by its promises. The anger born of a sense of betrayal implies an earlier faith" (107). However much one might like to believe this particular story about the nascent revolutionary powers of a constrained, greatly disenchanted intelligentsia, though, Scott himself inadvertently suggests just how easily such threats may be contained by referring to Caliban as the synecdochic representative of the "graver threat" posed to the powers that be. For while it is true enough that Caliban did indeed have designs to overthrow Prospero, his teacher and benefactor, in the end his threat is easily contained. Consequently, he is left to live out a life of isolation with nothing more than his conjuring dreams, while Prospero is restored to his former position of power back in the "civilized" world. In other words, the reference Scott himself supplies suggests that no matter how disillusioned, angry, intelligent, or mystically endowed the disenchanted individual may be, that person is bound to lose out against such a highly organized and highly mutable system for disseminating and extending social power.

Perhaps Scott, like so many scholars before him, has been momentarily swept away by the revolutionary promise of the inherently virtuous extrainstitutional individual; but the overarching argument of his project is useful to us here because it shows how those who have been taken in by this vision of academic purity boil over in rage once they that they have realized too late that there is a profound disjunction between the intellectual life the academy is purported to provide and the bureaucratic life it actually delivers. Evidence of the effects of this realization may be found in any discussion among academics of employment prospects within the profession, where this sense of betrayal and anger is bound to bubble to the surface. There are, for example, the contrasting apocalyptic visions of the transformation of higher education into either vocational training or politically correct brainwashing. There is the lament that we are in the twilight of the profession as we have known it, as may be seen in the steady decline of tenure-track positions and the simultaneous expansion of a large, migratory teaching force, together with the increased demand for accountability

and oversight at every stage of the credentialing process. And, finally, there is the pervasive, palpable sentiment among those entering the profession and those already there that being an academic has come increasingly to mean being overworked, underpaid, the object of general scorn, the target of unprecedented levels of scrutiny. In short, everyone seems to agree that the academy is undergoing a radical reformation, but to what end and in response to what forces remains unclear.

While discussion of these issues has tended to stick to the business of lamenting what the academy has become, Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson have distinguished themselves by moving beyond the comfort of critique to the much riskier work of actually generating proposals for substantially changing the way academics approach the business of education. In the introduction to their jointly edited collection, *Higher Education under Fire*, Bérubé and Nelson demand that academics now "admit that the long-term collapse of the job market is making the logic of graduate apprenticeship morally corrupt" (20). Their reasons for focusing on graduate rather than undergraduate education become clear in the questions they ask us to consider: "What does it mean to face an academic future in which many graduate students will have none? What are the ethics of training students for jobs that few of them will ever have?" (20–21). With these pointed questions, Bérubé and Nelson draw on the ever-serviceable figure of the student to animate their charges concerning the moral and ethical failings of the academy. In so doing, they offer a version of "the student" that has not much concerned us in the preceding chapters: the student that most interests Bérubé and Nelson is the *graduate* student, a persevering entity who is faced with the impossible task of balancing the requirements for joining the profession and staffing the entry-level courses that tenured faculty presumably no longer wish to teach. Within this rhetorical gambit, in other words, the student becomes the embodiment of an accusation — a figure who haunts the academy like a guilty conscience, a constant reminder of the academic's inability to read, let alone control, the market forces that determine whether or not a job stands on the other side of all the courses, examinations, time, and debt that accompany the credentialing process.

In better times, it was easier for everyone involved in the business of higher education to think of "the graduate student" as an apprentice training to enter a vaunted profession — a "secular vocation," as Bruce Robbins calls it. With the collapse of the job market, however, it now requires a great deal more work to conceal or explain away the complicity of academics in the "morally corrupt" business of trading in human capital. Some have insisted that higher education has nothing to do with generating employable

end products; others long for the days when students worried more about learning and less about the future; and nearly everyone blames an ignorant public and craven administrators for misconstruing the virtuous work of graduate education as a form of exploitation. Bérubé and Nelson have succeeded in breaking free of this kind of critique in which all is denied and nothing is changed by arguing for a packet of institutional reforms and administrative procedures that would alter the material practices of higher education. They have suggested, for example, reducing the number and size of graduate programs across the country and strengthening the "gatekeeping function" of the master's degree (21). While these reforms would improve the employment picture by reducing the number of applicants competing for work in the academy, Bérubé and Nelson want, reasonably enough, to further improve their students' chances by increasing the number of available jobs. This, they believe, can be accomplished by enjoining universities and colleges to put together attractive early-retirement packages and strenuous posttenure reviews to remove nonperforming faculty members (21). Finally, in the interests of improving the treatment of graduate students prior to their entry into the job market, Bérubé and Nelson call for higher wages and better benefits for teaching assistants, better career counseling, improved training for teaching jobs at nonresearch colleges and universities, and a commitment by faculty to be more faithful in fulfilling their obligations to advance their students careers (22–23).

We will return in a moment to the question of whether or not such reform proposals ever could be enacted. Before doing so, though, I want to point out how heavily these proposals rely on a set of bureaucratic procedures to achieve the essentially social mission of ensuring future employment for current graduate students. Indeed, Bérubé and Nelson show themselves to have a remarkable faith in the power of such procedures to do a good job of discriminating between graduate programs that should be allowed to continue and those that shouldn't, between students who are best qualified to pursue advanced graduate work and those who should be terminated at the master's level, between advanced professors who are fulfilling their pedagogical, scholarly, and professional responsibilities and those who should be enjoined to consider the virtues of early retirement. In fact, Nelson believes so firmly in administered change of this kind that he has since codified his proposals into a "twelve-step program for academia," thereby transforming the massive bureaucratic system of higher education into a dysfunctional entity that needs only to be forced through his prescribed rigorous therapeutic regime to regain its psychic health and moral integrity. To help get the academy back on the wagon, Nelson believes there should be a

bill of rights for graduate students and teaching assistants, a union (which could exercise its power, in Nelson's now famous example, by "organizing group shopping trips to other states for all purchases"), and "a year's work for a year's wage" (or, perhaps more helpfully, a year's wage for a year's work). Community colleges should be encouraged to hire Ph.D.'s. Research universities should exchange postdoctoral teachers. The positive accomplishments of the academy should be publicized (22–25). In short, with all the moral authority he possesses by virtue of being an intellectual and not a bureaucrat, Nelson insists that the academy start living up to his standards.

However laudable Bérubé and Nelson's willingness to face up to the fundamentally bureaucratic nature of the educational enterprise may be, it is unfortunate that their insights have not led them to rethink how sustainable reform is achieved in an institutional setting. Because they have not considered this issue, Bérubé and Nelson fall into the "teacher's fallacy" discussed in Chapter 1: that is, they construct the academy itself as an unruly student, bereft of a local history or a set of internal motivations, ready to do the right thing if only told forcefully enough. Trapped in this fallacy, Nelson and Bérubé can't seem to shake the condescending mode of address that certifies their status as "true reformers" outside and above the system; for as Ian Hunter has argued, it is "as the bearer of a prestigious spiritual demeanor and moral authority...that [the figure of the critical intellectual] finds its niche in the school system, alongside the figures of the citizen and the bureaucrat" (xxiii).

Suffused with this moral authority, the scales having fallen from their eyes, Bérubé and Nelson have brought the good news of reform to their colleagues only to be met with a chilly reception. Nelson, for instance, reports being surprised by his colleagues' anger at his efforts to have the administration use some "vacated faculty salaries to increase the size and number of graduate student fellowships" (Cary Nelson 23). And Bérubé, conceding that "we can't do much about the...wholesale conversion of full-time, tenure-track jobs to part-time adjunct positions," can suggest only that we use "our waning sanity and ever-precarious good sense" to decry the inflated requirements for entry-level positions, which have "heightened tensions and worsened working conditions in the profession" (28–29). In the face of such hearty and heartfelt hortatory admonitions, can it really be surprising to learn that the faculty resists, the administration resists, and, following these good examples and relying on the traits that got them into higher education in the first place, the students themselves resist? When the chips are down, no one, it seems, is all that interested in banding together and working for the improvement of all.

Given Bérubé and Nelson's shared commitment to addressing such resistance to collective action head-on, it is worth noting that Nelson has been quite explicit about what part of academic culture is *not* subject to change: "although I have taught composition and enjoyed it, I would now find it *demoralizing and intolerable* to have to grade hundreds of composition papers each semester. There is no way I could do it as carefully and thoroughly as my graduate students do. So what is to be done?" (21, emphasis added). And with this backhanded compliment, praising *his* graduate students for their ability to do work he finds "demoralizing and intolerable," Nelson inaugurates his twelve-step program for reforming the profession. He seems to reason as follows: since he finds reading and responding to the work of beginning students unbearable, the problem he must solve is to propose changes that will improve the employment possibilities of his graduate students without imperiling his own position of privilege. Read in this light, Nelson's calls to shut down marginal graduate programs, to better police the boundaries separating master's and doctoral candidates, and to convince community colleges to hire Ph.D.'s all seem as concerned with preserving the primacy of research institutions as they are with addressing the putative needs of the oft-invoked suffering-but-dedicated graduate student. Presumably, Bérubé and Nelson are banking on the luminous presence of this sympathetic figure to bathe their proposals in the light of righteous indignation, thereby allowing what might seem to be fairly modest changes to assume the aura of radical rehabilitation.

To question Bérubé and Nelson's rhetorical deployment of the long-suffering graduate student is not to deny the exigencies of the current job crisis, nor is it to suggest that graduate programs are doing an adequate job of preparing their students to confront these exigencies. Once we have deflated the rhetorical force of this figure, however, we do have room for a consideration of the paradox that resides at the heart of their proposals: how is it that graduate students can manage to become so skillful at work Nelson and his colleagues find "demoralizing and intolerable"? Is it youthful enthusiasm? naïveté? a natural talent for dirty work? And what does Nelson do to ensure that his students don't end up with his profound distaste for such work, so that when the time comes for them to move into those newly created positions at the local community college, they don't somehow feel they've been betrayed by a system that brought them to the heights of critical theory only to drop them in what they have been so thoroughly trained to see as the academy's deepest valley of practice? Exactly what kind of "career counseling" is going to prepare future members of the profession for the shocking disjunction that exists between the demands of graduate work

and the bureaucratic realities of academic employment, whether permanent or temporary?

These—perhaps impertinent—questions are meant to return our attention to the *inescapable* situation that has constrained all of the reform efforts discussed in the preceding chapters, which may be summarized as follows: the academy is not simply a set of administrative, curricular, and pedagogical practices; it is also the people who have been captured and rewarded by those practices. As we have seen, this fact can be dismissed as irrelevant; it can be viewed as a curse hampering reform; it can even be regarded as a manageable problem that can be worked around. We have also seen that while it is certainly true that changing administrative, curricular, and pedagogical practices may alter the experience of higher education for those who enter the system in the future, such changes are unlikely to be seen as desirable by those already resident in the system. And because those already in the system will tolerate only incremental adjustments to their working conditions, the struggle between those who seek to reform the system and those resistant to such change almost naturally gives birth to a rhetorical world where endless calumny gets heaped on those whom the system rewarded in the past—they are lazy, old, ignorant, behind the times, immoral, angry, bitter—and unrestricted praise gets laid at the feet of those about to enter the system—they are honest, hard-working, the best and the brightest, dedicated, patient, thoughtful, sincere. With the battle lines so drawn, those interested in radically altering the bureaucratic delivery of higher education are left with very few options beyond wishful thinking: if only all the people already in the system could be retired or "reeducated," if only an alternative educational regime could be established, if only jobs could be created elsewhere for our students, then it would be possible to achieve economic parity, a measure of social justice, a more humane educational environment, a cultural revolution.

Of course, none of these options is actually available on the local level, but beckoning toward such lofty goals without developing and then acting on a plan for achieving them serves an important institutional function: it reinstantiates the critical intellectual as the academy's moral conscience— the lone voice of the dreamer who is fundamentally opposed to the senseless but indomitable forces motivating the bureaucrats who populate the administration. To escape the thunderous rhetoric that inevitably results when such archetypes come into contact, however, one need only observe that these figures—the abused student, the earnest reformer, the entrenched faculty, the indifferent administration, the incompetent profession—are all stock types, dutifully fulfilling the parts assigned to them in

the melodrama of educational reform. To be sure, recognizing that persistent calls to reform academic practice have a generic form does not deprive those calls of their urgency, for whether the call is made by Paulo Freire, Allan Bloom, or Cary Nelson, the unfolding drama about the vulnerable individual who must contend with seemingly immutable and certainly unreasonable rules and regulations inevitably captures the essence of the working conditions everyone faces in our highly bureaucratized world. The greatest horror in this drama is for the individual to be swallowed up by this world and become part of its undifferentiated mass of paper pushers. We see this horror arise in Nelson at the very thought that he might be required to descend back into the business of composition instruction, which, with its incessant circulation and assessment of student work, is from his perspective the academic equivalent of being returned to the secretarial pool. To be demoted to such a station is to lose one's hard-earned prestige: it is, quite literally, "*de*-moralizing," since the demotion is seen to deprive the intellectual of the critical distance necessary to assume an institutionally sanctioned position of moral superiority over others.

By focusing on educators who have sought to reform academic practices, I have departed from this more common understanding of "critical work" as the province of those who generate critique. Indeed, one might say that I have tried to "re-moralize" the intellectual mired in bureaucratic necessities, daily teaching requirements, mandatory acts of assessment. In closing, I would like to consider why this critical reversal in itself fails to provide the analytic tools necessary for constructing reform projects that are both feasible and humane. After all, we have seen that the general assumption of an agonistic relationship between academics and administrators serves important therapeutic and structural functions. It doesn't follow, however, that problematizing the assumed distinctions between intellectual and bureaucratic labor will assist those committed to developing curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative reforms that will actually alter how the academy goes about its business and who it employs to do that business. Indeed, there are good reasons to believe that problematizing this relationship might impede progress toward such reforms, since blurring these boundaries deprives intellectuals and reformers of the very moral authority they draw on to generate and defend their proposals. To put this another way, all intellectuals who commit themselves to reforming the academy immediately get caught up in an inescapable structural contradiction: the moment the reform effort moves from the planning stage to implementation, the intellectual is in danger of becoming entrapped by the bureaucratic machinery necessary for designing, delivering, and then assessing the new educational product

or experience the proposed reform seeks to make available to those en route to the academy.

Confronted with such seeming dirty work, teachers at all levels regularly convene to lament that "education is now being treated as if it were a business," determinedly ignorant of the fact that, as the preceding analyses have clearly shown, education has been a business *for well over a century* and is sure to remain one for the foreseeable future. Because bureaucratic detail and business interests are seen to be inimical to our fond notions about the pursuit of knowledge—ideally a selfless act, a spiritual adventure, a pure quest for truth—discussion about how to discriminate between different ways of carrying out the business of higher education has floundered. Consequently, those who have been willing or have been compelled to do the work of setting admissions standards, designing curricula, establishing appropriate modes of assessment, and generating adequate grievance procedures—those people, in other words, who have had to choose between one set of bureaucratic practices and another—have been left to labor in a kind of critical darkness.

It has been one of my concerns here to show that, historically, laboring in this critical darkness has not prevented those committed to reforming the academy from devising a range of strategies for coming to terms with the administrative demands that simultaneously constrain and enable the educational enterprise. Standing outside the system, one can declare oneself an "alien," as Matthew Arnold did, and critique the government's management of social affairs from afar; standing against the research system, one can construct a curriculum that is expressly antivocational, as Hutchins and Adler did at the University of Chicago and Buchanan and Barr did at St. John's; standing against the system that promotes a belief in disinterested knowledge, one can assist students in seeing the presence of business interests in the seemingly neutral area of popular culture, as U203's course team did at the Open University; and finally, standing against systems of racial and economic discrimination, one can train teachers to rethink their assumptions about language use in the classroom, as Shirley Brice Heath has done. But whether one withdraws from the administrative realities of a system that ceaselessly solicits and assesses student work, as Arnold attempted to do, or one immerses oneself in that business in hopes of altering what it is that students are asked to do and how their efforts are to be evaluated, as all the other reformers discussed here sought to do, the only certain outcome is that the reformer's dream of escaping institutional constraint will *never* be realized. Things will never work out exactly as planned; the results will never be just what was expected; contingencies will always arise; unan-

ticipated resistances are certain to proliferate. Consequently, to enjoy some small measure of success, any effort at reform must be conceived of not as an isolated act but as an ongoing process that forever needs to be tended to, monitored, and nurtured. The educational system, in other words, will always reveal itself not to be fixed once and for all by some pronouncement from on high or by some set of well-thought-out reforms that have been implemented, but rather to be perpetually in need of fixing.

For most who work in the academy, the inescapability of this dynamic, which retards progress in *any* given direction, is the source of considerable frustration. It is yet one more argument about the virtues of retiring to the security of one's own classroom or office, where one's designs can, presumably, be realized more immediately, if on a much smaller scale. And, to be sure, given the complexities involved in effecting institutional change, the maze of macro- and microbureaucratic detail to be negotiated, the certitude that, at best, whatever gains can be made will only be achieved incrementally over broad stretches of time, and the inevitable disappointments along the way, there are good reasons for seeing the effort to reform academic practice as fool's work. Indeed, once one factors into the reform equation the necessity of addressing the concerns of those already employed in the business of higher education, the enterprise may seem utterly hopeless. To glimpse just how profound are the mental and psychological barriers that impede the actual work of reforming work practices in the academy we need only recall that Nelson finds demoralizing and intolerable not the business of concocting a "twelve-step" program for the profession that will *never* be adopted, but the very thought that he might be required to participate in the instruction of entry-level students. And by insisting that he *could not* do such work as well as his graduate students, Nelson exemplifies a strain of the profession that strategically represents itself as beyond the reach of instruction, remediation, retraining, reform—as, in effect, an unteachable, depleted human resource.

We need not despair as we recognize the prevalence of such sensibilities in the academic community, however. Rather, understanding this mind-set can be the first step in constructing a reform project that addresses not only the administrative mechanisms that govern academic life but also the cultural realities produced by those same mechanisms and deeply felt by those employed in the business of education. In other words, conceding that institutional reform is inevitably constrained by the presence of those already in the system means accepting that the thoughts, desires, and motivations of those whom the system has rewarded must be respectfully engaged if such reform is to have any chance of success. The collapse of Hutchins's

efforts at the University of Chicago, discussed at length in Chapter 3, most vividly illustrates the dangers of dismissing the concerns of the resident workforce, since Hutchins could sustain his sweeping reforms only as long as he wielded enough power to silence and terrorize his foes. During this period, Hutchins's detractors did what any group with limited access to cultural power does when under attack: they hunkered down and waited out the storm, participating in all the time-honored forms of resistance at the disposal of those who labor in immense bureaucratic systems. Some luminaries resigned in spectacular fashion, some tenured faculty carried on public skirmishes with the president and his followers, but most members of the community participated in the reforms as required, dragged their feet when it was expedient and prudent to do so, and sighed in relief when the system returned to something like its former orientation. Similarly, when Barr and Buchanan sought to uproot the faculty, staff, and student body in Annapolis and take the Great Books program on the road, no one followed them, because to have done so would have been, in all respects, an act of pure folly, one that would have demanded that the followers renounce all ties to the local community, abandon the campus, and willingly give up the hard-won comfort of knowing what lay ahead in exchange for an evanescent vision of what Barr and Buchanan insisted would have been a better life.

As these examples show, treating real members of the academy—be they students, teachers, or administrators—as disembodied ideas to be discarded or moved about at will inevitably undermines any effort to institute sustainable reform, since these players in the drama of higher education exist not as ideas but as historical beings, with reasons for their actions and thoughts that are not necessarily amenable to revision through argumentation or even through the imposition of administrative force. In this regard, intellectuals, administrators, and students are no different from anyone else who works in a large bureaucratic system: they need to be *persuaded* that change is necessary, they would prefer to exercise some control over how change is implemented and assessed, and they want to be certain that the proposed changes will not make their own work obsolete or more difficult. If these conditions aren't met—and they almost never are—then the affected parties offer public conformity and private resistance, engaging in what Scott calls an "undeclared ideological guerrilla war" that is fought with "rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity" (137). However understandable it may be that even the most well-intentioned efforts to reform academic practice provoke such divided responses, by way of conclusion I would like to con-

sider the degree to which this resistance to change and perceived sense of powerlessness can be put to work improving academic working conditions.

To complete the trajectory of this book's argument, which has moved from the past to the present, from the "alien" to the local, I draw my closing example from a graduate seminar I have taught for the past two years in the English department at Rutgers University. In this case, as with those that have preceded it, it is worth considering the multiple forces motivating and constraining all the players in the field. This seminar, "The Teaching of Writing," is required for all graduate students assigned to teach the introductory composition course, EN101, for the first time. Like all required courses, both the graduate seminar and EN101 tend to be perceived by those in attendance as elementary, inessential, perhaps even the product of a punitive administrative gesture. Furthermore, in the wake of the efflorescence of Foucauldianism, this particular graduate seminar is likely to be seen as a disciplinary mechanism that openly relies on panopticism to exercise its power: the graduate students *must* all teach out of the same textbook; they *must* meet the Writing Program's requirements for the minimum number of assigned drafts and revisions; they *must* conform to the Writing Program's standards for responding to and assessing student work; they *must* pass the seminar in order to continue teaching in the program; twice a semester, they *must* submit their student papers, along with their comments, grades, and assignments, for outside evaluation; and, finally, they *must* continue to abide by these requirements and submit to this review for as long as they continue to be employed by the program. In short, in exchange for tuition remission, a modest annual stipend, and health benefits, the graduate students *must* agree to submit to the demands of the Writing Program. They are not free to teach what they like. They are not free to teach as they might like. They are not free to teach whomever they would like.

On its face, this would not appear to be the ideal teaching situation. And, in fact, the seminar can't help but begin in an atmosphere fraught with tension, because the student-teachers' presence in the seminar is institutionally compelled, because the Writing Program further constrains what it is the student-teachers are allowed to do in their classrooms, and, finally, because the student-teachers are pursuing advanced graduate work that has no obvious relation to their instructional tasks. As Scott might have predicted, many of the graduate students in the seminar find sufficiently ambiguous ways to communicate their genuine sense of having been betrayed by a system that requires them to receive such instruction: after all, they feel quite keenly the genuine disjunction between the content of their education,

which has entailed struggling to understand postmodern theory, to master the evolving canon of postcolonial fiction, to plumb the depths of literary history, and to cover the areas in their comprehensive exams, and the content of their employment, which requires them to find ways to communicate with students for whom stringing together two coherent paragraphs is an achievement. Aren't their intellectual powers being wasted in such menial labor? Hasn't something gone terribly wrong with the system that has produced this sharp disjunction between the education they're receiving and the work that is being required of them? Couple these well-warranted misgivings with the other emotions that accompany the work of teaching—the persistent fears of inadequacy, the frustrations of not capitalizing on unexpected moments in class discussion, the unfamiliarity with a new system of instruction—and all the necessary ingredients for a pitched pedagogical battle seem to be in place.

These are the emotional realities that define the seminar at its outset and they are among the constraints that I must respect and work with as part of my responsibilities toward this particular student population. Of course, given the power relations that further constrain all the players in this drama, it would certainly be possible to proceed as if these concerns did not exist, a strategy that would allow the seminar's discussions to focus exclusively on the narrowest, most instrumental understanding of what writing instruction entails—namely, the business of producing expository prose that is well-organized and relatively free of surface errors. In some ways, providing a course of this kind would be easier on everyone: it would reduce a rich area of intellectual inquiry to the mechanical work of prose tidying—a kind of scholarly chore best carried out quickly so as to make even more room for the work the graduate students must complete in order to continue their progress toward their degrees. Obviously, offering such a course would hardly be unprecedented in the history of composition studies, which is littered with just such instrumentalist approaches to the business of training entry-level students to write. Whatever appeal there might be to teaching such a course, though, doing so would clearly violate the standards that my department and the director of the Writing Program have set for teacher training at Rutgers. Thus, even if my disciplinary training didn't prevent me from representing the work of composition studies as "demoralizing and intolerable"—which it does—the local culture at my home institution would militate against my reducing this central departmental responsibility to the equivalent of a dreary stint in purgatory.

Such departmental requirements also reflect local decisions about what graduate students must know in order to function professionally. And, as

anyone who follows recent trends in academic hiring can attest, the truth is that regardless of how graduate students in English may *feel* about the work of teaching composition, most of the available jobs require the instructor to spend considerable time working with entry-level students. As we have seen, there are plenty of examples of academics who decry this fact, seeing in it evidence of everything from a collapse in academic standards (why admit students who can't write?) to the bureaucratizing of the university. But even those who voice such longings for the academic life of some bygone era must concede that the relatively brief period when being an English professor meant teaching exclusively in the area of one's expertise to a self-selecting student populace is all but over. This is not to say that there are *no* jobs available that free one to teach what one wants, when one wants, in the way one wants, to the students one wants or that it is *completely* impossible for someone entering the field to land such a job. It is rather to recognize that regardless of talent and expertise, most graduate students aiming to enter the profession at this time can anticipate spending a significant part of their teaching career working with entry-level students, participating in an educational exchange that bears almost no resemblance to the kind of exuberant pedagogical fantasies portrayed in *The Dead Poets Society*.

At the risk of breaking with the professional consensus that this shift in the job market and the ongoing redefinition of what constitutes work in the profession is wholly to be lamented, I would like to suggest that this shift in the job market is better understood as an opportunity for anyone truly interested in becoming a public intellectual, anyone committed to improving the educational chances of the disenfranchised, and anyone who has more than an academic interest in the work of theorizing and disentangling encounters with difference. The twilight of the profession, in other words, can also be seen as the slow dawning of a new profession, one that may well be more committed to meeting the needs of students on the margins of the academy, more responsive to the concerns of the local community, and more prepared to set in motion a range of pedagogical and bureaucratic practices that can provide instruction in the arts of working within and against systems of constraint. That I find these possibilities exciting and even desirable does not mean I have forgotten that this vision of what the profession might evolve into is not the vision that lures most people to graduate school, nor does their attractiveness enable me to ignore the great deal of agony, disappointment, and anger that this shift in the job market has occasioned. To the contrary, thinking about the profession as it is and as it might become has compelled me to convene a graduate seminar on "The Teaching of Writing" in which those preparing to enter the profession are

encouraged to consider together what a career of teaching and scholarship entails, whether they want to pursue such work, and what standards they might draw on to assess whether or not any given career should be deemed a success.

In the seminar itself, these issues take concrete form once the graduate students begin to confront the challenges of learning how to read the student writing that is being produced in their own courses. As they attempt to gain an understanding of the Writing Program's standards of assessment—struggling, for instance, to see what distinguishes an "A" from a "B" paper—the frustration with the course and with the Writing Program mounts. Accustomed as they are to the free play of semiosis in their own work, they are disturbed to discover that at this evaluative moment, there are no absolutely clear-cut guidelines to follow, that the methods of assessment are context-specific, that the work expected of the beginning students appears so demanding, and that the standards appear too high and the course of instruction too difficult. As it turns out, much of the course pivots on determining the source of their general frustration with the business of commenting on and grading student work, for concealed within this emotional (and therefore knowing) response resides a range of controlling assumptions about what it means to teach and learn in the academy. While this frustration surfaces in different ways for different students, it is inevitably tied up with a dissatisfaction at discovering how limiting the business of teaching can be.

Obviously, few teaching situations have as many devices for constraining and observing instructors as the one I've described here, a circumstance that often leads beginning teachers to posit the existence of a different kind of teaching where one can teach what one wants in the way one wants, assigning the grades one deems fair according to one's own standards. But while it is certainly true that there are less overtly constraining teaching situations, the important point to recognize is that *all* teaching positions in accredited programs require a terminal assessment of student work. This unavoidable process of soliciting, assessing, and responding to student work constitutes the core of the business of education, whether one is teaching entry-level students how to navigate academic prose, assisting advanced undergraduates construct independent research projects, guiding graduate students toward the successful completion of a dissertation, or commenting on submissions to an academic journal. It is doubtless the case that varying amounts of prestige accrue to those engaged in the different manifestations of this evaluative work, but the central activity of reading and assessing the labor of others remains the same, whether the labor is that of a first-year student, an advanced graduate student, a metaphysical poet,

or a postmodern theorist. Thus, the absolutely predictable anxiety that emerges around the business of grading papers and the consequent desire to escape to a realm of employment where this work is less carefully scrutinized can't be understood as a discomfort with power, though it is frequently explained in these terms. Rather, this anxiety *must* be read as an expression of distress at discovering the essentially bureaucratic nature of teaching in the academy: one's work, regardless of how dutifully carried out, thoughtfully planned, or brilliantly presented, inevitably leads to a moment when students generate some response that can then be assessed. No matter what happens in the classroom, the seemingly homogenous mass must be hierarchized into varying levels of success. And even for those teachers who enjoy this evaluative work quite a bit, the business of separating the wheat from the chaff inevitably appears as a distraction from the more important work of delivering a good lecture, producing a solid piece of research, serving on an important panel at a national conference.

For those who believe that being a teacher is supposed to lead to absolutely autonomous working conditions, that the intellectual and the bureaucrat are antithetical entities, and that academic standards are not negotiable and subject to change over time, the experience of actually working in the academy is bound to be experienced as a betrayal of some sacred trust. There is no question that this felt sense of betrayal is both profoundly painful and all but completely disempowering. Indeed, the academic presses dependably churn out their annual load of bookshelf-bending diatribes about the collapse of the university, the struggle for the soul of higher education, and the imperiled academy precisely because the discovery of the bureaucratic nature of academic work is *always* news to a workforce that has been lured by the promise of academic freedom and the unbounded pleasures of the life of the mind. Perhaps the time is ripe, though, to leave off critiquing the academy for having failed to make good on its promise to deliver a meaningful, morally sacrosanct life and to begin, instead, to work within the fiscal and bureaucratic constraints that both enable the academic enterprise and limit its scope. With regard to teaching, this means recognizing that one is inescapably implicated in a bureaucratic system and therefore the best one can do is to commit oneself to the seemingly impossible project of becoming a "good bureaucrat." As noxious as such an idea is sure to sound to most, given the negative connotations of the word, this proposal is bound to appear positively repulsive to those for whom the virtues of bureaucracy are inconceivable.

It is true enough that when weighed against the pleasures that moral outrage affords, the promise held out to those who would reconsider the re-

lationship between intellectual and bureaucratic work is modest indeed: by letting go the ideology of the intellectual's exclusively critical function, one gains the opportunity to experience a real sense of agency in the world of local academic affairs. By "a real sense of agency," I do not mean that in faithfully carrying out one's teaching duties, assigning grades fairly, promoting the academic success of all students regardless of race, class, sexual orientation, gender, or political leanings, and serving on departmental and university-wide committees one will somehow change the nature of academic work. This certainly won't happen. But to think of agency only as the ability to alter massive cultural structures, to shift the thinking of large numbers of people, or to perform any number of similarly grand feats of conversion is to effectively remove agency from the realm of human action, since no individual, working alone, has ever achieved any of these goals. If, however, agency is understood as learning how to work within extant constraints, as an activity that simultaneously preserves and creates the sense of self-worth that comes from participating in the social world, it becomes feasible to think of the higher education as ideally providing all under its power both training in and opportunities to experience the arts of such agency.

In order to make progress toward this goal, students, teachers, and administrators must develop a sufficiently nuanced understanding of how power is disseminated in a bureaucracy to see that *constraining* conditions are not *paralyzing* conditions. Such an understanding is always well within reach; as soon as one enters the school system and begins to learn about its ritualized practices, its shortcomings, its prejudices, and its strengths, one inevitably discovers that "relatively autonomous" working spaces are there to be found. Under these conditions, it isn't long before all students realize that not all teachers have the same standards, require the same amount or kind of work, respond in the same way, demand the same level of respect and punctuality, act according to the same protocols of behavior, and ascribe to the same ethical or political belief systems. Unfortunately, this common experience is generally called on to support a surprisingly unsophisticated analysis of the dynamics of power in a bureaucracy. That is, even as they perceive a spectrum of constraint, students, teachers, and administrators alike tend to analyze this spectrum in exclusively dyadic terms. There are those places where one is free—for the student, this means those rare classes where the teacher values one's work; for the teacher, this sense of freedom is likely to arise in response to being allowed to decide the content of instruction; for the beleaguered administrator, freedom may come only when one is on vacation, away from the reach of the office. And, then, there

are all the other places where one is paralyzed, where one's work is nothing more than empty response to mandatory requirements—for teachers, students, and administrators, this could well describe the vast majority of experiences within the school system. When this is how life in a bureaucracy is understood and experienced, it is not surprising that fantasies of escape and thundering jeremiads about the system's gross inequities result.

It is important to recognize that such outraged responses are functional at a certain level, since they successfully reinscribe each player in his or her role in the academy's melodrama. This does not mean, however, that the speaker succeeds in attaining some less tainted space. For, as we have seen, even those most interested in reforming the system have found it impossible to escape the bureaucratic machinery of assessing and evaluating the work of others. And, as we have also seen, all the fulminating moral posturing in the world does nothing to change this essential aspect of modern life. So what remains, for those who want to change what can be changed, is tinkering on the margins of the academy—altering admissions standards; contributing to the slow, sustained, all-but-anonymous work of designing curricula that are more responsive to a range of learning practices and cultural backgrounds; training teachers to think differently about the assumptions underlying the idea of native intelligence; participating actively in hiring decisions; and providing instruction at all levels in the arts of discovering the possibilities that emerge when one sets out first to enumerate and then work on and within extant constraints. Such modest adjustments won't overthrow the university, of course. Nor will capitalism be brought to its knees. Nor, finally, will the manifest social injustices of an institution that trades in the business of naturalizing and then hierarchizing the citizenry's culturally produced differences be permanently eradicated. The most one can hope for is that fostering the development of this hybrid persona—the intellectual-bureaucrat—will produce an academic environment that rewards versatility as well as specialization, teaching as well as research, public service as well as investment in the self. But by providing students with the opportunity to rethink the assumed opposition between the academy and the business world, the intellectual and the bureaucrat, it may just be possible also to promote the development of sensibility that can bear thinking creatively about administrative matters—a state of mind that will seek to ensure that institutional working and learning conditions approach the humane ideal that resides at the core of all efforts to democratize access to higher education.

The academy is actually already well positioned to make the modest shift necessary to begin working in this direction. Recent work in cultural stud-

ies and postmodern theory, as well as ongoing efforts to understand subject-formation in relation to race, class, and gender, has provided much of the critical knowledge that being a "good bureaucrat" requires. That is, one who would take on the hybrid persona of the intellectual-bureaucrat would apparently have to possess remarkable tolerance for ambiguity, an appreciation for structured contradictions, a perspicacity that draws into its purview the multiple forces determining individual events and actions, an understanding of the essentially performative character of public life, and a recognition of the inherently political character of all matters emerging from the power/knowledge nexus. All of these attributes are highly valued on the contemporary critical scene; all of them might be put into service in the act of brokering administered change. While the critical knowledge available could assist in redirecting attention to the bureaucratic realities and exigencies of higher education, this project also has at its disposal a workforce that brings with it a storehouse of lived experience that necessarily includes successful strategies for navigating a bureaucratic system and ideas about ways to make the system function more efficiently, if not more humanely.

While this wealth of critical and experiential knowledge would seem to provide a promising foundation upon which to construct an academic culture that valued the anonymous labor of the intellectual-bureaucrat more highly, it would be foolish to imagine that the predictable revulsion at the notion of bureaucratic work can be overcome either by reasoned argument or by gestures toward the body of evidence documenting the collapse of a market for purely intellectual labor. One need only try to find a positive representation of a bureaucrat to understand how deep the enmity for this kind of labor runs. After all, from a commonsense perspective, what possible attraction could there be to the work of pettifogging, paper-pushing, rule-bound, ring-kissing, social automatons? Indeed, the search for a positive representation of the bureaucrat reveals how bureaucracies figure across the entire narrative spectrum as the social space that true individuals avoid at all costs. For regardless of whether the particular bureaucrats represented are personnel from the military, government services, law enforcement, education, or the political sphere, generic conventions require that all dignity, honor, and glory go to those who distinguish themselves from this faceless mass of "men in suits" and their duplicitous behavior.

A rare and particularly instructive exception to this rule is *Citizen X*, Chris Gerolmo's 1995 film about the real-life effort to capture the Soviet serial killer Andrei Chikatilo. The story's opening is conventional enough: it pits Viktor Burakov, a newly assigned police forensics expert, against a large,

utterly unconcerned, and immobile bureaucratic system. Thus, when Burakov announces to his superiors that a serial killer is responsible for the death of thirteen young children whose bodies have been discovered spread about the local countryside, the knowing viewer can't be surprised when the massive Soviet bureaucracy dismisses his allegations on the grounds that serial killing is "a decadent Western phenomenon." When Burakov takes his complaint to his immediate superior, Col. Mikhail Fetisov, he is told that the panel leader who refused his request for assistance "may be a stupid man, but he is in charge."

While *Citizen X* commences with this familiar opposition between the intellectual and the bureaucrat, the film is remarkable in that it resists the equally familiar resolution to this conflict, where the intellectual either triumphs over or is roundly defeated by the mindless bureaucratic machine. Perhaps because the film strives to be responsible to the historical record, it opts for a murkier course, recasting Burakov's eight-year search for Chikatilo as the story of a diligent investigator's attempt to reconcile himself to the inescapable realities of a bureaucratic world where, more often than not, a stupid man is, indeed, in charge. Burakov—the intellectual, the expert, the detective—is by no means a willing or happy student during this process of "reeducation," of course. It is not difficult to understand his frustration and rage: he has discovered a pattern that points to the existence of a serial killer; he has followed procedure and brought his discovery to the attention of his superiors; and he has had to watch helplessly as his superiors demonstrate that they have no higher interest than preserving their own power and prestige. The intellectual has detected a problem, but he can't find a way to make the bureaucrats care about the problem, and so he boils over in anger.

Fetisov sees and understands Burakov's frustration and tries to explain to him that there is *no way* around the bureaucratic system: "The only way that I have been able to get anything done," he says to the detective, "is behind closed doors, by hoarding favors, by bribing, by wheedling." Such an "explanation" simply further fuels Burakov's rage, which in turn compels him to blurt out to his superior the observation that, while time is being wasted in such indirection, children will continue to die at the hands of the unknown serial killer. What Burakov can't understand, because he has given himself over to his moral outrage, is that Fetisov is well aware of consequences of the bureaucracy's relative inaction: "It will take all our strength to suffer these outrages, but suffer them we must because we are the people who have to catch this monster. You and I. As you may have noticed, no one else is even willing to try."

Again, with the lives of innocent children weighing in the balance, it is not surprising that Burakov finds little solace in Fetisov's words. In fact, as far as Burakov is concerned, he's merely been treated to some faceless bureaucrat's automatic and insincere expression of regret. Consequently, as Fetisov turns to leave, Burakov concludes the exchange by issuing the accusation that is always ready to hand when the moral figure of the intellectual and the unprincipled figure of the bureaucrat square off. "You care about nothing but making your superiors happy," he says to Fetisov, to which his superior replies, "You're right. I should spend more time trying to alienate them. Perhaps you could teach me." As the search drags on and the killings continue (Chikatilo was ultimately convicted of murdering fifty-two children), Burakov continues to treat Fetisov with the contempt one reserves for one's moral inferiors. Thus, when Fetisov informs Burakov that some amusing gossip about a high Soviet official has surfaced during the interrogation of a prisoner, Burakov sneers, "You think a man is what he says, don't you, Colonel?" Once more, Fetisov responds with words that Burakov cannot understand: "He is if he talks for a living." Burakov, the idealist, presses the point, insisting that "a man is what he fights for." Fetisov replies, without any apparent regrets, "Well, I don't fight for anything."

At this point in the action, Burakov and Fetisov appear to embody the antithetical interests of the intellectual and the bureaucrat — the former determined to capture a real threat to society, the other enjoying a salacious glimpse into someone else's private life. As it turns out, though, Burakov's contemptuous moral superiority has prevented him from recognizing the importance of the gossip Fetisov has overheard. He hasn't attended to what Fetisov has told him about how change is effected at the upper echelons of a bureaucracy, where people are employed, by and large, to talk for a living. It is only later, when Burakov realizes that Fetisov has successfully deployed the gossip he's overheard to neutralize Burakov's most powerful critic, that Burakov comes to appreciate Fetisov's ability to manipulate the bureaucratic system dominating both of their lives.

From that point on, Burakov and Fetisov begin to learn from each other. Burakov figures out how to manipulate his superiors to achieve his own ends and he concedes that often it is necessary, as he puts it, to "sprinkle a little sugar" in order to have the investigation function smoothly. For his part, Fetisov finds his tolerance for the stupidity of his superiors has receded and, in its place, an overwhelming passion for finding the killer surfaces, filling him with such rage that he is unable to act effectively at a crucial moment in the investigation. Thus, at the film's climax, with Chikatilo in custody but refusing to confess to Fetisov's superior from Moscow — a

man hungry for the glory of having closed the case—it is Burakov who is able to convince Fetisov's superior to step aside so that the psychologist, Bukhanovsky, might have a chance with the prisoner. When it matters most, Burakov shows that he has come to understand why it is so important to learn how to work within bureaucracy's constraints and that doing so need not compromise the ends one desires. Thus, when Bukhanovsky emerges from the cell, having elicited Chikatilo's confession, his final judgment concerns not the serial killer, whose guilt was known all along, but rather the relationship between Burakov and Fetisov, where the moral ground seems much less firm. Parting company with the intellectual and the bureaucrat, Bukhanovsky says simply, "May I say that together you make a wonderful person."

This is a fitting sentiment to close on, as it captures what is, at this historical moment, the essential and necessarily symbiotic relationship that exists between the intellectual and bureaucrat, each of whom depends on the other to make the work that they do possible and meaningful. It is certainly the case that the academy can continue to operate, as it has from the outset, by seeing work in these spheres as fundamentally opposed. And there are undoubtedly compelling reasons for steadfastly refusing to entertain the possibility that these two spheres might be made to function in concert. However, for those of us weary of feeling utterly powerless—those of us interested in translating into a workable plan of action the dissatisfaction with institutional life that makes itself known everywhere in all of our lives—overcoming the deep revulsion we all feel for the bureaucratic conditions that simultaneously constrain and enable our labor in the academy may well be the best chance we have for shaping how the business of intellectual inquiry gets carried out in the future. That is, if shifts in the job market and in hiring trends do indeed signal that the academy is undergoing a radical reformation at the hands of economic powers over which no single individual or corporate entity exercises control, the best strategy available to anyone seeking to enter or remain in the profession may well involve fabricating for oneself and for the academic community at large some inhabitable version of the intellectual-bureaucrat.