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Appendix, or, Professionalism All the Way Down

→Industry

American Association of University Professors

American Council of Learned Societies

→Profession/Discipline

Modern Language Association

American Historical Association

American Comparative Literature Association

American Anthropological Association

American Musicological Society

American Academy of Religion

College Art Association

Society for Classical Studies

Society of Architectural Historians

→University

Princeton University Graduate School

Princeton University Office of the Dean of the Faculty*

*see in particular Academic Structure of the University

Princeton University Office of the Dean of the College

→Department

[Insert departmental or program website here]

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30. Walton C. John, *Graduate Studies in Universities and Colleges in the United States*, U.S. Department of Education, Bulletin no. 20 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934), pp. 46-52.
31. Sol Cohen, ed., *Education in the United States: A Documentary History*, 5 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974), 5:2755.
32. A few exceptions lingered. See John, *Graduate Study*, pp. 24-31, 201-2; Stephen H. Spurr, *Academic Degree Structures: Innovative Approaches* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 16-17, 148-49; Walter Crosby Eells, *Degrees in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1963), pp. 6-7.
33. Richard J. Storr, *The Beginning of the Future: A Historical Approach to Graduate Education in the Arts and Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 48.
34. Joseph Ben-David, "The Universities and the Growth of Science in Germany and the United States," *Minerva* 7 (Autumn-Winter 1968-69): 1-35. See also Terry Nichols Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 84-89.
35. Veysey, *Emergence*, pp. 304, 320-22. The resurgence of liberal culture in the early twentieth century, under the leadership of two strong university presidents (Woodrow Wilson and A. Lawrence Lowell), may perhaps be understood as a reaction against the increasing autonomy and parochialism of the departments. See also Hawkins in this volume.
36. Delaye Gager, *French Comment on American Education* (New York: AMS Press, 1925), pp. 2-3.
37. Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper, 1952), pp. 15, 27-29.
38. F. Emerson Andrews, "Growth and Present Status of American Foundations," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105 (1961): 158. See also Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy, *Foundations: Private Giving and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 39-41.
39. In addition to John Cole's essay in this volume, see Arthur E. Bestor, "The Transformation of American Scholarship 1875-1917," *Library Quarterly* 23 (July 1953): 175-77.
40. Roger W. Cooley, *Brief Making and the Use of Law Books*, 2 vols., 4th ed. (St. Paul, Minn.: West, 1924), 1:67-68. See also Frederick C. Hicks, *Materials and Methods of Legal Research* (Rochester, N.Y.: Lawyers' Cooperative, 1923), pp. 250, 271.
41. I am indebted to an unpublished paper by Saul Benison on the Army Medical Corps, presented at the 1976 Newagen Conference sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
42. *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Current Series, vol. E:361. See also John Lawler, *The H. W. Wilson Company: Half a Century of Bibliographic Publishing* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1950).
43. J. McKeen Cattell, ed., *American Men of Science: A Biographical Directory* (New York: Science Press, 1906), p. v. See also Dorothy Ross's biography of Cattell in *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement Three, s.v. "Cattell, James McKeen."
44. Stephen Sargent Visser, "J. McKeen Cattell and American Science," *School and Society* 13 (December 1947): 450-52.
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The Order of Learning in the United States: The Ascendancy of the University

EDWARD SHILS

I

The history of the order of learning in the United States from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I may be seen largely as the history of a fundamental change in institutional structure. One particular class of institutions, the university, gained ascendancy over other institutional forms for the discovery and diffusion of knowledge, and specific universities within that newly dominant class came to be recognized as the central elements in the academic order. The ascendancy of the universities was based on superiority in productivity, both qualitative and quantitative, and in prestige—a prestige acknowledged not only within the order of learning but by the wider public as well.

In a sense, the history of learning in this period is characterized by two important developments. First, the amateur scientists and scholars were displaced by those who earned their living by studying and teaching within an elaborate institution. Second, those institutions whose members regarded study and teaching as their major obligation came to be recognized as the primary instruments for the cultivation of learning in America. In the decades following the end of the Civil War, the productive scholars and scientists of the United States increasingly became members of academic institutions. Instead of relying on their own financial resources and carrying out their work at home or in the private libraries of learned societies, the new scholars and scientists gained their livelihood primarily through employment by a college or university, using the books, journals, laboratories, and equipment provided by these institutions. Far less common and prominent were scholars and scientists who had no obligation to concern themselves with the discovery and communication of truths to their peers and juniors through learned papers, classes, and seminars—the men of learning who lived from their own privately amassed or inherited fortune or conducted their intellectual activities avocationally while earning their living as administrative civil servants, diplomats, journalists, private businessmen or practitioners of a learned profession, sacred or secular.

This important change in the life of the scholar was graphically depicted by Max Weber in *Wissenschaft als Beruf*. Weber did not, however, lay equal stress on the concomitant ascendancy of the university, perhaps because a similar transition had already occurred in Germany and Weber thus took for granted the preponderance of the university in the order of learning. It is true that during this period amateur scientists and scholars were also being absorbed by governmental research institutions, such as agricultural experiment stations, the Geological Survey (including the Bureau of Ethnology), and, following the turn of the century, by such private research organizations as the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, the Bell Telephone Laboratories, and the General Electric Laboratory. Nonetheless, in the midst of this more pervasive incorporation of scholars and scientists in institutions, the growing dominance of the universities within the cosmos of American learning appears in retrospect to have been the most significant feature of the time.

In 1865 most of the serious and productive intellectual life of the country was still carried on outside the universities. Of the most famous scholars and scientists alive in the early part of the period, Henry Adams, J. H. Motley, George Bancroft, Joseph Henry, and Henry C. Lea were not university teachers, although both Adams and Bancroft briefly held posts at Harvard. J. W. Powell taught for five years at Illinois Wesleyan University and at the Illinois Normal University. Charles S. Peirce taught at The Johns Hopkins University for five years. The tradition of private and avocational learning in the United States persisted but it was unable to maintain the dominance it had once enjoyed, largely because it could not meet the demand for greater opportunities for scientific and scholarly research and training that led to the institutionalization of learning in the universities. Even in the time of its greatest prominence, the American amateur tradition lagged behind its European counterpart, particularly that of France and Great Britain, in both scale and achievement. The striking difference between the United States on the one side and Great Britain and France on the other was that the United States did not produce that closely serried sequence of geniuses that made British and French science and scholarship of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries so distinguished. The United States never attained the great height of amateur learning of Great Britain's mighty mountain chain that linked together peaks like William Harvey, Robert Boyle, Joseph Priestly, John Dalton, Humphrey Davy, Charles Darwin, Edward Gibbon, David Hume, Thomas B. Macaulay, George Grote, David Ricardo, and James and John Stuart Mill.

Indeed, American scholars and scientists were very conscious of their peripherality with respect to Europe and this probably influenced their level of aspiration; they seem not to have thought that it lay within their power to produce works of the quality of their European contemporaries. It is clear that America lacked sufficient concentration of talent in a center; the intellectual community that existed was too attenuated to produce the necessary self-confidence. In addition, the reservoir of persons sufficiently educated and wealthy to devote them-

selves to learned pursuits was probably too small. Even in cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, persons with a high degree of concentration of purpose and energy were too few in number to embody and express, in a sufficiently compelling way, standards that could compete with the immediate, practical, and highly absorbing professional, political, and commercial preoccupations of the time. The local and state academies did not have enough prestige to compel individuals without very strong intellectual character to live up to the highest standards. Perhaps the original mental endowment was lacking; perhaps family traditions and the informal, local intellectual communities and academies in the United States were neither dense enough, intense enough, nor stringent enough to call forth the exertions and the accomplishments that emerged in Great Britain. Perhaps there were just not enough geniuses who were sufficiently committed to scientific or scholarly studies to give an immediately apprehensible form to the mode of proceeding and the ethos needed for outstanding accomplishment. Undoubtedly, there was a circularity of effect. In any case, in no field, except perhaps historical studies, did the United States have clusters of eminent amateur scholars and scientists of the quality attained at the higher reaches in Europe.

Yet is unlikely that either a larger number of practitioners or greater accomplishments would have saved the tradition of amateur scholarly and scientific research in the United States. More young persons wanted to do research than were able to support themselves from their own private means, and the knowledge of how German universities had turned such aspirations into reality increased the number of American aspirants to careers in college and university teaching. Thus the amateur tradition was bound to yield, just as a much more productive amateur practice in Europe had yielded, to competing academic institutionalization, or—as Max Weber would have called it—academic bureaucratization.

II

Prior to the opening of The Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the learned world in the United States was rather inchoate. It had no center and no hierarchy, yet it was somewhat differentiated. There were colleges, universities (at least in name), governmental scientific bureaus, and the bare beginnings of industrial research enterprises. A few learned associations and scientific and scholarly journals had been established. One national quasi-governmental academy, two old academies that purported to be national, and a number of academies of local jurisdiction were also in existence, as were museums and several large libraries. The result was an amorphous agglomeration of institutions and activities that were scant in number and widely dispersed territorially; the connections between them were infrequent and of marginal importance.

With the retreat of amateur research, the cognate institutions of amateur research, namely, the local scientific and scholarly academies, went into decline. The avidity of intellectual desire could not be satisfied by the occasional meet-

ings of academies or by the limitations of private means nor could local academies attract more specialized audiences. What they offered was too slight in comparison with the opportunities for intercourse and investigation offered by universities and especially university departments and laboratories that were the most fundamental elements of the emerging translocal scientific and scholarly communities.

The few outstanding individuals who dominated science and scholarship in this period—among them Asa Gray, Joseph Henry, and Simon Newcomb—did not plan for or foresee the ascendancy of the academic order. Insofar as they thought that a single institution or institutional order should predominate, they looked to the National Academy of Sciences or the Smithsonian Institution to perform that role. It was felt that these bodies should give advice to the government on matters that involved science and technology, recognize and honor past achievements in science, and guide and encourage scientists toward the study of certain fields and problems.

The establishment of Johns Hopkins, Clark, and the University of Chicago changed the intellectual environment in unpremeditated ways. Governmental scientific institutions lost their previous position of relative predominance as their work was exceeded in volume and at least equalled or surpassed in quality by the products of academic research. There were, moreover, many areas of scientific endeavor that lay beyond the concern of the government; here the universities had a free hand.

Yet the close link between science and the universities that emerged might not have developed had the American government chosen to promote science as the French government had done in the seventeenth century through the honors granted and the resources allotted by the Paris Academy of Sciences, or as the Soviet government has deliberately done by elevating the Academy of Science above the universities and giving it control over all research except that carried on by the various ministries. Despite widespread confidence in progress through the "arts and sciences," the government of the United States was not inclined to establish a comprehensive program to promote such endeavors because it was believed that the "arts and sciences," like economic life, would develop from the initiative of private persons. Instead, governmental scientific institutions became complementary or ancillary to the universities, providing practical services, conducting surveys, and offering employment to university graduates and facilities for publication of their research.

The American government's scientific interests were limited to specific areas, as evidenced in its support of the Coast Survey, the Geological Survey, and the Permanent Commission of the Navy Department. The Smithsonian Institution could have been used for the furtherance of scientific research but the government never attempted to develop it in this way. Until the end of the period, the National Academy of Sciences performed little more than honorific functions. Since it had no resources for the support of research, the NAS could do little to advance science in general, or even in particular directions. Unlike the Royal

Society of London or various German academies, the National Academy could not even function as a meeting place because its members were separated by large distances. Until the creation of the National Research Council, the NAS did not even carry out functions for which it had been expressly founded—to serve as advisor to the federal government. In a sense, the fact that the National Academy of Sciences was not promoted to a position in which it could exercise influence by its accomplishments, example and prestige left the way open for the academic order to attain ascendancy.

In agriculture, the field in which governmental science reached its peak, colleges and experiment stations had to await the ascendancy of the universities before they could become effective. The founding of the first agricultural experiment stations more or less coincided with the establishment of the Johns Hopkins University; the first land grant colleges preceded Hopkins by about a decade. Both institutions were in some measure the result of the same ideals that had inspired the creation of the new universities—ideals that were embodied, or were thought to have been embodied, in German practices. Even before the Civil War, these ideals were being advocated by young men like Evan Pugh and Samuel Johnson, two American chemists who studied in Germany in the 1850s. They maintained that scientific results comparable to those achieved in the German universities could contribute to the improvement of the quality of agriculture in the United States, and they went on to take leadership roles in the development of America's agricultural colleges and experiment stations.

Yet until the new type of university was well established, agricultural institutions scarcely advanced. In the agricultural schools of the land grant colleges and state universities, teaching was the primary function, leaving little time for research. Prior to the passage of the Hatch Act in 1887, the few existing experiment stations conducted only limited research activities. Neither the staff members of the early colleges and stations nor their public "believed" in science with the ardent conviction that led to its application. The farmers who formed the lay constituency of these institutions had no understanding of how fundamental scientific research could improve their productivity: they wanted information about the quality of the seeds they purchased and the fertility of the soil they tilled; they were interested in testing by specific and reliable methods; and they thought that agricultural colleges should provide practical training in farming.

In the 1880s, enterprising deans of agricultural colleges and directors of experiment stations tried to create among farmers an appreciation of the results of scientific agriculture that they were not in a position to deliver, partly because trained agricultural scientists were still in short supply and partly because money was not available either to employ scientists or to provide them with the resources needed for research. When funds were forthcoming after 1887, these administrators turned to the universities in search of scientists. What they found were individuals infused with the new ethos of the American academic order and determined to do more than conduct tests and analyses and manage model farms. The young agricultural scientists shared the values of the pious pioneers, Pugh

and Johnson. They were offended by both the contemptuous attitude expressed toward them by teachers of the humanities and sciences at their own state universities and by the layman's belief that they were simply analysts. The ideal of the university as a place of fundamental learning impelled them and they wanted to conform to its implicit demands.

The entry of the United States Department of Agriculture into the promotion of agricultural research and the bonds established among the younger scientists on the staffs of the agricultural experiment stations—through the formation of sections of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of specialized scientific societies and through the creation of journals—reinforced the pressure of this ideal and the determination of the better-trained "station men" to be regarded as scientists. For these individuals who felt themselves cut off from the academic center, the Department of Agriculture provided the experience of solidarity and consensus with like-minded persons and embodied the ideal to which they were devoted.

The agricultural scientist's conception of himself as a scientist was further strengthened by attending conferences and reading scientific journals, which in turn fortified his attachment to the scientific ideal. Yet the presence of the university remained the essential element for agricultural scientists seeking professional identity. In the first instance, they could not establish a system of science wholly separate from that cultivated in the universities. They were trained in universities; some of them had taught in universities; the basic sciences on which they drew were developed in universities; and the universities presented to them the realization of the scientific ideal. Their principal achievements in genetics and plant pathology were offshoots of the science of the universities and they wanted the approbation of their colleagues within their own scientific disciplines. Passage of the Adams Act (1906), which allocated federal funds for "original" scientific research, bore witness to the ascendancy of the standards of the university over the scientific activities of extra academic institutions. As Charles Rosenberg has observed elsewhere, in the end, the significant contributions of agricultural experiment stations to both the improvement of farming practices and the advancement of biological sciences can be attributed to their "willing adherence" to the values of the academic order.

The agricultural experiment stations remained in a dependent and supplementary position to the university in part because they adopted the principle of specialization; in this sense, their status was analogous to that of the independent research institutions, such as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and the Carnegie Institution of Washington, which appeared early in the twentieth century. The prestige of specialization was great in America during this era, but it was not unequivocal. Despite the respect accorded specialization as a form of moral self-discipline and a more efficient way of conducting research, the older ideal of breadth of perspective was still vital and the standing of research institutions suffered accordingly. The university was unique in that it covered the entire

range of learning. There was always an opportunity for a specialist whose interest impinged on an adjacent or occasionally remote field to seek guidance from a colleague in that field. Moreover, because the universities were able to incorporate their most distinguished graduates, they came to form an intellectually self-sustaining order. In contrast, research institutions, both private and governmental, were designed to cover a narrower range of topics and often proved to be less attractive to the best university graduates. Even in those specialized fields in which they carried out important work, their accomplishments were never imposing enough for them to represent an alternative dominant order to the universities.

The dependent relationship between the universities and private research institutions in this period is exemplified by the development of an institution that did not become an independent research center—the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole established in 1888. As in the case of the universities, a German model was chosen. The pattern was sketched by Karl Vogt who organized the first summer classes in marine biology in 1844; it was established in a more elaborate and stable form by German zoologist, Anton Dohrn, who founded the *Stazione Zoologica* in Naples in 1872. Charles Otis Whitman, the first director of the Marine Biological Laboratory, had taken his Ph.D. degree at Leipzig and had worked at the *Stazione Zoologica*; he argued that if a comparable American institution were not established and supported, American work in the pertinent subjects would remain permanently inferior to that of Germany.

Unlike Carnegie and Rockefeller, the Marine Biological Laboratory was not intended to be an autonomous institution with its own permanent staff of investigators and completely independent financial resources. The model on which it was based emerged from a situation in which the academic order had become dominant; the institution in Naples was conceived as an indispensable *auxiliary* in certain fields of science. In America, the MBL depended on the universities to provide the investigators, young and old, who worked at Woods Hole during the summer months. The leading American biologists of the period before the First World War came to the MBL—but their sojourns there were interludes in their academic careers.

The dependence of the Marine Biological Laboratory on the universities is illustrated by the career of Whitman. When he was young and not yet famous, he thought of the Laboratory as an institution that would compensate for the deficiencies of research in the universities. After he became a famous professor at the University of Chicago, he viewed it as ancillary or complementary to the work of the universities. It acquired a dual function that postulated the prior existence of the universities; it had the characteristics of a three-month meeting of a set of closely related professional scientific societies, yet it was also a laboratory where university teachers could turn their attention to specialized topics difficult to work on elsewhere, while also engaging in a continuous informal exchange of information and interpretation. The MBL became a unique part

of the academic world—an interuniversity institution that established a precedent for the consortia that developed after the Second World War around the accelerators at Brookhaven and Weston.

Just as the MBL, the Rockefeller Institute and the Carnegie Institution were dependent on the prior and continuing existence of the universities to sustain their composite of activities, bodies such as the New York Museum of Natural History, the Field Museum, and the American Geographical Society lived alongside the universities but did not form a national system for the organization of learning. They sponsored important research and publications by members of their staff who were also custodians of their collections; they maintained serial publications of scholarly monographs and developed their collections. Their work, however, was marginal and supplementary to the large volume of high-quality research carried out in the same fields at the universities. If they were rivals of the universities, they were rivals only in the relatively narrow ranges of learning that they covered. At the same time, their dependence on the universities was inevitable. Unless they were to rely largely on learned amateurs, they had to recruit their staff from persons who had been trained in universities and who continued to look to universities as the centers of learned production. In addition, the main audience for the publications of the most important of the autonomous research institutes was to be found in the universities.

There was yet another reason why the private research institutions could not compete effectively with the universities—they were simply too few in number. When the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and the Carnegie Institution of Washington were established at the turn of the century, there were practically no similar institutions with which to form an alliance and create a sense of community; the two together were not enough to serve as a point of crystallization. Independent research institutions as constituencies of an autonomous and dominant order within the whole order of learning had no precedent. The Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft was not established until 1911. The Physikalisch-technische Reichsanstalt was largely governmental, as was Britain's National Physical Laboratory. The Royal Institution, distinguished though some of its associates were, never presented a pattern that was recognized by public opinion as an example of how scientific research and training should be organized. At the same time, there were already many universities and their very existence challenged and supported those who sought to reform them. To be sure, the universities had to be reformed before they could ascend to a dominant position, but their prior existence in considerable numbers gave substance to the belief that they were endowed with the power of endurance. For all these reasons, the autonomous research institutes, however distinguished their accomplishments in specialized areas of research, were compelled to function as somewhat peripheral parts of the academic order.

The industrial research laboratories were even less well qualified to compete with the universities. Not only were they very few in number, relatively small in

size, and specialized within a narrow range, but they did not accord freedom of publication to their scientists and were, for the most part, devoted to applied or practical research. They were considered to serve the standard of profitability rather than an ideal of the selfless pursuit of truth and were regarded in public opinion as less worthy of deference than were the universities.

In a different way, libraries were also confined to a peripheral position. From the beginning, university libraries were clearly subsidiary. The great public and private libraries performed invaluable functions but mainly as adjuncts to the academic order. Libraries in this period were no longer collections assembled primarily for the sake of giving a permanent resting place to the results of human creativity; having ceased to be ends in themselves, they became instrumental to the desires of their users. Nonetheless, neither the Library of Congress nor the Library of the Surgeon-General, any more than the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Museum, or the Preussische Staatsbibliothek, could become centers of a national system of learning. The tasks of a library are principally curatorial and hence auxiliary to the use of the books, manuscripts, etc., that it houses. A library does not teach; the training and formation of a staff of librarians, archivists, and paleographers, whether they are engaged in full-time research or whether their research is supplementary to their curatorial functions, does not approximate the teaching in universities.

Independent and specialized professional schools, particularly those concerned with the study of medicine, were also largely overpowered by the universities over the course of this half century. Advanced technological institutions like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology were the only ones in their category that approached the eminence and centrality of the leading universities and they did so by approximating the broad functions and interests of the university. Despite the promise of their early beginnings, independent engineering colleges like Rensselaer fell by the wayside. Once entry into the legal profession became conditional on systematic study, independent law schools, apart from universities, never emerged from a rather lowly obscurity. By the end of our period, only a few independent medical colleges survived without incorporation into universities. Again, it was the German model that showed the way. The growing recognition that education for the learned professions required systematic and fundamental training in scientific subjects made it imperative that professional schools be associated with universities. The alternative was to wither.

Independent liberal arts colleges that provided education for undergraduates were the only institutions that managed to withstand the tentacular dominance of the universities—an achievement that can be attributed mainly to their decision to concentrate on the instruction of younger students and to eschew research. For many years their proponents fought a rear-guard action that was partly successful, partly unsuccessful. They became subsidiaries of the universities by sending many of their graduates on to postgraduate and professional studies and by

drawing some of their teaching staff from the universities. Those that grew into universities, as did Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Columbia, were able to retain some of their identity, largely by resistance and concessions.

III

After examining the various classes of learned institutions in some detail, the general question remains: Why, in this period, did the universities succeed in establishing and maintaining dominance over the American order of learning? The main part of the answer lies in the universities' dual function of teaching and research. An institution that produced both its own *Nachwuchs* and the staff of other learned institutions assured itself of centrality in the system of learning. It aroused identifications and loyalties that later experience did not extinguish. It fostered parochial traditions that provided the motive for more widely acclaimed achievements. By teaching, the universities guided the future of their subjects; they infused their influence into members of the next generation, encouraging students to go beyond what they had been taught and to do so in the tradition in which they themselves had discovered and learned. Teachers were enlivened by their relations with students. Teaching maintained identification with a wider discipline yet it did not prevent specialized research.

The American university's dual commitment to teaching and research was not evident when the leading state universities of the Midwest were founded in the period before the Civil War. Both the legislatures and the wider public thought of these state institutions primarily as agents for the spread of an "improving" knowledge, as disseminators of the best of inherited knowledge and only secondarily as the creators of new knowledge. The concept of improvement was vague and comprehensive, signifying not only improvement of a practical sort but spiritual improvement as well. Moreover, an interest in practical improvement was not identical with an interest in research; rather, it reflected the work undertaken by the schools of agriculture and mechanical arts that came to be associated with these universities as a result of the Morrill Act.

An indisputable place for research in American higher education did not come until the later decades of the nineteenth century. As the reflux of young men from the German universities began in earnest, complaints were heard that American universities did not conduct research, that they were reluctant to demand that professors undertake research, and that they did not give due reward, in terms of appointment and promotion, to past and prospective accomplishments in research. It was only with the founding of The Johns Hopkins University in 1876, Clark University in 1887, and the University of Chicago in 1892 that a pronounced shift occurred in the nature of the American higher education. The establishment of Johns Hopkins was perhaps the single, most decisive event in the history of learning in the Western hemisphere. It was the impact of competition from Johns Hopkins and the embarrassment of comparison with it that led

academic leaders including Charles Eliot of Harvard to respond to demands from some of their teachers to provide in various ways for ongoing research.

In the second half of our period, American universities sought to make research an integral and major part of their program, while never abandoning the teaching function that had enabled them first to attain, and then to maintain, their dominance in the world of learning. They were determined to uphold the expectation that everyone in the university would engage in research. They did not succeed. Then as now, there were some who did a great deal of research, many who did a little, and others who did none. There were also some who protested plaintively or vehemently against the effort to reward accomplishments in research. At universities like Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, and Yale, large groups of professors regarded the teaching of undergraduates as the primary obligation and viewed with unease the precedence in fame and salary accorded to their colleagues who were more productive in research. Their criticisms were sometimes intertwined with the resentment of humanistic scholars toward the natural scientists—a resentment that seemed to be the epitome of all that was most detrimental to the preservation of the traditional culture of the educated man.

In some respects a compromise was attained through division of labor. There was first a division between the universities, which did both research and teaching with a marked emphasis on the former, and the liberal arts colleges, which concentrated mainly on teaching and neither encouraged the practice nor provided support for research. Second, within the universities, there emerged a division of labor between the younger teachers who were assigned the more elementary courses and their older colleagues who taught the advanced courses that were more directly related to research. (This dichotomy had been observed by Max Weber when he travelled in the United States in 1904.) While the junior faculty had heavier teaching responsibilities, they were also expected to engage in research, especially at the midwestern state universities and the new private universities. At the same time, the more established, senior scholars had less teaching to do and their teaching was more congenial to research.

Except for this division of labor, the balance between teaching and research was never free from stress. It was a delicately poised equilibrium in which each part appeared to be ready to fly off centrifugally. Yet the break never occurred. Fragile and distressing though it often was, the equilibrium was held within the institutional vise of the university as an institution, and sustained by the German ideal of what a university should be.

The advantage which the universities had over other organizations in securing funds to support research was another factor contributing to their ascendancy within the order of learning. Again the importance of the pedagogical function is evident. Little financial support was obtained by the universities explicitly and exclusively for research. Nonetheless, despite what might appear from the perspective of today as an arduous round of teaching responsibilities, scientists

and scholars who wanted to do research, especially those above the rank of instructor, could find time for it. They were paid to teach but they also could do research "in the interstices" of teaching. Financial requirements for research were not large and there were few projects for which many assistants were required.

Although the two decades between 1880 and 1900 were years of praise for science, that praise was not accompanied by a readiness to spend much money on research, particularly fundamental research. As noted earlier, industrial enterprises moved very slowly to establish laboratories; they still counted on purchasing inventions offered to them by individual inventors. The federal and state governments recognized the value of research but they usually thought of it as survey, assay, testing, and routine analysis; the "users" in agriculture or mining wanted exactly such services. The state and local academies of science, and the three national academies—the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Academy of Sciences—had very little money for research; they sought mainly to give honors to those who had done research without their aid. The universities were in an advantageous position because their relatively large staffs were paid to devote themselves professionally to activities which were close to research in a place where libraries and laboratories existed. The universities, moreover, were increasingly committed to an ethos which held that scientific and scholarly research was essential to the advancement of knowledge.

While the tradition of "pure research" was adopted from the German universities, its successful institutionalization in the United States can be attributed largely to the structure of the universities that cultivated it. In the American universities, research was what later came to be called a "spin-off" of the provision for teaching. The money spent on research might not have been as great as was desired by the academic scientists—although one does not encounter many complaints about its paucity—but because it was hidden in an "unvouchered" budget, the resulting arrangements allowed academic scientists to pursue their own interests and follow their own convictions as to what was scientifically important. Scientists in agricultural experiment stations had to respond to a public of "users," demanding immediately practical but often scientifically insignificant results. Scientists in government and industrial enterprises could not choose their research subjects nor were they always free to publish their results. Academic scientists, however, had no masters who prescribed practical or routine research; they were limited only by their own capacities and imaginations and the demands of teaching which did not by any means consume all their time and energy.

Those who carried out research in the university benefited in yet another way. With a public consisting of university teachers in their own field, they could become famous in that field throughout the whole academic order—a distinction that was more difficult to achieve for those without the advantage of a preestablished public and the means of communicating with it. The plurality of the

universities gave the impression of a mighty concourse which was reinforced by the linkages and interchanges between the members of various learned institutions. A translocal identification was strengthened in the minds of those who experienced this plurality of connections and thus felt themselves to be engaged in a vast, national, and international movement of the spirit. Despite the growing specialization in research, the coexistence of the practitioners of disciplines within faculties and of faculties themselves within universities created a density and radius of intellectual intercourse which supported the general conviction that the advancement of knowledge was an end of the highest value.

The universities dominated the institutionalized system of learning for still another reason, namely, their comprehensiveness. They taught and investigated over the entire range of learning. This multitude of diverse, specialized interests enabled the universities to receive the deference that had hitherto been accorded to the churches. In addition, they could focus their attention on fundamental problems; they were not circumscribed by practical necessities. At a time of faltering theological conviction, the university scholar or scientist assumed the role of an earnest seeker after fundamental truth.

In the allegedly practical and "materialistic" American society of the period after the Civil War, there was still a deep piety that had ceased to be monopolized by the doctrines of ecclesiastical Christianity. The seriousness with which fundamental knowledge was pursued by universities aroused the admiration of those possessed by this enduring piety. By their concern with fundamental learning, the universities were able to become, in a sense, the heirs of the churches. More specialized, more practical institutions could claim neither that vital inheritance nor the consequent support of private patrons and state legislatures.

Finally, pervading all the factors contributing to the dominance of the university was the decisive element—the love of learning. It is said, quite frequently, that the scientific side of the American academic order, particularly chemistry, developed in response to the needs of industrial capitalism in the United States; that is not, in fact, the case. As late as 1900, only a small fraction of the chemists in the United States were employed full-time in the chemical industry. In an era when most firms were still operated by single owners or partnerships, the individual units were simply too small to support research. By the first decade of the century, there was much talk of the positive contribution of scientific research to industrial progress. Publicists and ceremonial orators repeatedly praised the practical powers of scientific knowledge. Academic scientists themselves began increasingly to legitimate their scientific research by reference to the practical benefits it would produce. Enthusiastic discussions about the introduction of Frederick Taylor's "scientific methods" into management became common. Nonetheless, even in the large firms, Taylor's ideas were not seriously implemented until after the First World War. Had industry been more insistent on the utilization of the results of scientific research, industrial laboratories attached to particular firms and independent laboratories working on scientific problems would have been more common. As it turned out, the motive force of scientific

research lay within the university—in the interest of the scientists themselves and in the willingness, if not the active desire, of strong university presidents to reserve a portion of the academic budget for research. The situation was no different in the other disciplines. In the case of the social sciences, the desire for social improvement was a supplementary factor. However, in all areas of learning the primary motivation for growth was intellectual curiosity—an irreplaceable desire to understand.

Through its various endeavors the university managed to accommodate specialization as well as breadth, practicality as well as fundamental enquiry. The university was, moreover, self-reproductive and self-extending. The combination of research and teaching might have been adventitious; however, once it was put into practice, the result was an unsurpassed arrangement for promoting the discovery, diffusion, and influence of knowledge. Taken together, these factors resulted in the increased visibility of academic research, a mutual awareness on the part of members of the academic order, and a sense of community among academic scientists and scholars across institutional and disciplinary boundaries as well as within them. Universities had long been visible to the educated and to some sections of the governing classes, but as science grew in prestige, they were recognized and given increasingly more prominence by organs of public opinion. Science and the universities became almost identical for the broader public; scholarship in the humanistic and social science disciplines gained from the association. When the "demand" for science increased, as it did in the early decades of this century and especially during the First World War, the universities were in the first line to satisfy this demand, thus ensuring and increasing their ascendancy within the order of learning.

IV

One of the principal elements of the German tradition—and a major factor in the triumph of the university within the American order of learning—was the emergence of specialization as a requirement of scientific and scholarly achievement. Systematic training in the universities, especially at the postgraduate level, was more conducive to specialization than was the self-education of the amateur. The specialized academic was in regular contact with his specialized colleagues and he was expected to demonstrate both a detailed mastery of numerous minute details and an acquaintance with a large number of publications dealing with these details. The amateur, following some other occupation and proceeding at a more leisurely pace, could not cover the same ground at the speed required by specialization. As the number of persons working on a limited range of closely linked or similar problems increased, the results of scientific experiments and other types of research could not be allowed to lie about in drawers. The need to achieve, manifested in the desire for recognition, loyalty to a department and university, personal ambition, and the scientific ethos all pressed for publication as rapidly as possible. The more productive specialists became,

the more imperative specialization became—it was impossible for any one person to master more than a narrow sector of the expanding body of scientific literature. The increased number of specialists and the creation of new journals greatly enlarged the body of literature on particular topics; the expanded holdings of university libraries likewise made the task of "keeping up with the literature" more demanding and possible only at the cost of general reading.

Specialization displayed both lights and shadows. Its lights were a seriousness of purpose and an intention to make a contribution—the desire to win recognition from those qualified to judge whether a given piece of work added to the body of significant knowledge in a field and made further progress possible. The growing conviction that "truth always lies in the details" meant that the details had to be explored with increasing thoroughness. As the word dilettante became a term of scorn, the American academic order increasingly turned to the German model of *Fachmenschentum*. (To be a serious scientist or scholar required that one be a *Fachmann*.) There was a stern moral overtone to specialization. It meant no trifling, no self-indulgence. It was unsympathetic to false pride and omniscience. In sum, specialization was consistent with the secularized Protestant puritanism of the quarter century preceding World War I.

To be sure, the ideal of *Bildung* was not wholly vanquished by the concept of *Fachmenschentum*. It should be noted that many of the scholars and scientists who entered American academic life in the 1880s and 1890s were widely read in philosophy and literature. Despite the praise of the specialist that was heard everywhere in Germany, the breadth of reading of the German professors appeared overpowering to the young Americans studying in Germany. William James' description of Dilthey in one of his letters home in 1867 spoke for the thousands who came after him. Many of the young Americans themselves had already studied modern literature and classics as well as scientific subjects. In Germany they sometimes became intoxicated with reading not just in their own subjects but over a wide range. The aftermath of religious doubt deepened their philosophical interests. In later years, many of those who had studied in Germany retained their knowledge of German; this too kept them from exclusive concentration on a single subject.

Nonetheless, specialization was making its way under the shadows of a narrowing range of attention. Its progress was aided by the departmental system that permitted a measure of specialization in teaching. Still, the degree of specialization in teaching was never as pronounced as it was in research where it went hand in hand with the extension of the radius of the academic's interest beyond the boundaries of his own college or university. The individual investigator who wished to follow closely the most recent literature in his field inevitably became part of a national and international academic community. And since the names of universities were never completely severed from the names of individuals, the deference accorded to individuals for their respective achievements was diffused onto their universities, producing an institutional hierarchy based on distinction in science and scholarship. By requiring the academic to direct his attention

outward, specialization in research contributed to the definition of the centers of the academic order—those institutions that provided the models of topics to be studied, observations and interpretations to be examined, and standards of achievement to be built upon.

Yet specialization did not result in the fragmentation of the academic order, although it did reduce the magnitude of a culture common to most academics. The reputation of the leading universities was not based on achievement in a single area but in many different fields of research. By supporting the translocal elements of the scientific and scholarly community, specialization served to consolidate the academic order and its hegemony over the amateur and other intellectual institutions.

V

From the 1880s onward, the holders of doctorates from American universities and those who had studied in German universities—in outlook and status, they were increasingly identical—became aware of the qualities and interests they shared as practitioners of particular disciplines. The result was the growing prominence of national scientific and scholarly associations and their journals. Before the Civil War and in the two decades immediately following it, the activities of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, like the efforts of the earlier established *Verein deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte* and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, had provided occasions for intellectual intercourse. Contact within the boundaries of loosely defined disciplines was eagerly sought, and for this reason the special sections of these societies multiplied. The disciplinary learned societies, formed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, were expressions of a desire for a more regular and intense intellectual interchange that would link men of learning who had been dispersed throughout a burgeoning national territory.

For many, the desire for such contact had been quickened by their intense intellectual experiences in small Germany university towns or in university quarters of larger towns, where they found themselves in the company of other young men equally passionate in their devotion to enhancing their understanding and improving their knowledge, and where the "professor" appeared to be the embodiment of learning in its most exalted form. This close contact among intellectuals was evident not only in tightly knit university communities but also at the national level in the existence and activities of national scientific and scholarly associations such as the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. American scholars had never been exposed to such intense intellectual activity at home and the experience left an indelible mark.

For these young men, returning to the United States in the years immediately following the Civil War meant reentering a life where the intellectual air was very thin. Those who found employment in colleges and universities felt isolated. The older generation of teachers was neither accustomed to nor interested in engaging

in serious scholarly discussions at a local or national level. In most colleges and universities, departments, which first emerged as administrative conveniences attendant on the system of electives, were small, and thus there was little opportunity to encounter like-minded colleagues. Students as serious about the pursuit of learning as these young scholars had been were rare. The "Germany-returned"—to use a term parallel to the "England-returned" which became current in India—had a sense of being cut off from a vital source of intellectual substance. Unlike the "England-returned" Indians, however, the Americans were in a more invigorating environment. They felt a need not only to teach and to do research in their chosen fields but also to create a sense of intellectual community. Rather than repining or losing themselves in feelings of impotence, they set about to stimulate American intellectual activity by pursuing their own scholarly and scientific labors and by founding societies and journals that helped to fill the empty, isolating space around them.

In contrast with the older academies, the scientific and scholarly societies that began to emerge in the 1880s were formed around specialized disciplines and were relatively independent of universities. They represented an effort by amateurs and scientific and scholarly organizers to break out of the boundaries set by locality and to reach across space into national communities. Increasingly they were taken over by academics, in consonance with the ascendancy of the universities, and became the periodic gathering place of scientists and scholars from various universities.

In terms of the "Germany-returned" Americans, the establishment of these societies was more than an effort to confer legitimacy on and to elevate the status of the new academic professions while increasing their public influence. Both the organizations and their publications were intended at least as much to uphold the intellectual morale of the young generation of academics who were not wholly at ease in the sparsely settled intellectual domain of their own country. By providing the conditions of intellectual community, young academics gave a sense of their ability to influence scientific and scholarly progress. The journals that they founded were, of course, a means of communication but more important they and the learned societies served to sustain the faith of young scientists and scholars in the value of their undertaking by bringing more impressively into their consciousness the similar interests and activities of others.

These academics were fortunate to live in a period when the larger movements of society, before and during their own time, were favorable to their goals. At the very foundation of their good fortune was the widespread persistence of a firm Christian belief. Their own falling away from the basic theological and historical tenets of Christianity in their literal form did not dissolve the more general bearing and active force of character that such belief engendered. These academics adhered to the value of exertion for the purpose of seeking an ultimate truth and of subsequently transfiguring the earth in accordance with that truth—in whatever sphere—and they believed that exertion brought commensurate reward. They had ceased to believe in a literal Christian interpretation of the universe and

of human existence, yet they were determined to repair that loss by replacing it or shoring it up with scientific and scholarly knowledge, which if it did not disclose God's design, would at least reveal the lawfulness of some of the workings of nature and society.

They were fortunate too in returning to the United States at a time when universities and colleges were beginning to look favorably on "modern subjects," at least to the extent of employing young scholars who had studied them. The departmental organization of universities had not been designed to create local intellectual communities, but it made their formation easier by bringing together in circumscribed spaces persons of overlapping and sympathetic interests. Moreover, the departmental pattern of organization gave scholars the opportunity to undertake specialized investigations, which had been emphasized in their German training as one of the decisive requirements of intellectual progress. The fact that research could be launched with small grants or none at all was another fortunate element. As active researchers, young academics were able to consolidate their identification as scientists and scholars working in particular disciplines. It is true that they did not have the leisure and freedom of the German *Privatdozent*; they had to teach elementary courses and they had to teach more hours weekly but they also had the advantage of being paid. Although unsteadily poised on the lowest rungs of the academic ladder, they were at the beginning of an academic career. The increased number of posts in a department and the gradation of ranks offered the promise—not certain but at least possible—of advancement. A young scholar or scientist was no longer a school teacher or an assistant master serving at the pleasure of the head master or president—a "hand" taken on at short notice and dismissed at equally short notice. He was beginning to become a "college teacher" or a "university teacher." There was a new dignity in the status of "college" and "university teacher," a new conception of the powers, privileges, and obligations of the position. "Practical men" might have spoken disparagingly of such an occupation but university teachers themselves often felt that they had embarked on a lofty calling.

Yet this new image of the university scientist and scholar would not have emerged without another closely allied change. Before the Civil War, presidents of colleges had been imperious and autocratic; they were the chief agents of their governing bodies; all their teachers were their "assistants." Powerful though the presidents were, they had not been influential in advancing the cause of learning; they had regarded themselves largely as administrators of schools in which the moral character of selected youths was formed. About 1870 onward, a major change occurred. College and university presidents remained powerful, but a small influential group of them emerged to exercise their power on behalf of learning. Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins was the first and foremost; followed by Andrew White of Cornell, G. Stanley Hall of Clark, William Rainey Harper of Chicago, and Charles Eliot of Harvard, all of whom moved in the same direction. Like their junior faculty, they were persuaded that the life of learning had become one of the highest vocations of man.

Just as the young teacher could feel himself at the beginning of an academic career, full of potentialities, so too did the presidents of the colleges and universities acquire a sense of their potentialities. At the end of the nineteenth century it was the great magnates of industry and commerce who, despite the roughness of their methods, represented in the eyes of the educated public the forward surge of the country toward greatness. Yet university and college presidents were not insignificant figures in this powerful wave of moral progress and national eminence. They shared the confidence of leading businessmen, politicians, and publicists in the grandeur of what was a collective national undertaking. Their particular jurisdiction was the world of learning and they benefited from the approbation that was accorded to it by many of the leading figures of American society. A spectrum of "anti-intellectual" elements including fundamentalist Christian sects, rough and vulgar politicians, Gradgrind-like businessmen, cultural philistines, and the ebbing reservoir of the genteel tradition persisted in the United States, but they did not dominate the newly forming and reforming universities. The receptivity of state legislatures in the Midwest and on the Pacific coast and the philanthropic largesse of great businessmen assured university presidents, and in turn university teachers, that the currents of public opinion were running in their direction.

Thus the "Germany-returned" young American scientists and scholars did not come home to a barren waste. Even the hindrances to their progress were in flux and they were encouraged by evidence of like minds and situations. They knew that there were others facing similar problems and possessing a similar resolve to prove themselves in the world of learning and to bring that learning to bear on the shortcomings of their society. They gravitated toward the universities led by presidents whose ideals and goals they admired—universities where they saw the lamps of the German tradition burning, dimly in some, more brightly in others.

VI

Accompanying the ascendancy of the universities over the American order of learning was the ascendancy of a few universities within the national academic order. Important scientific papers and distinguished learned dissertations were not produced at every university, and the audience for scholarly work was as unevenly distributed as those who addressed it. At the same time, it was rare that a given university could point to a complete concentration of intellectual talent and production in a particular subject. One university might exceed another in the number of its eminent teachers and investigators and in the number of Ph.D.'s granted in a given field, but it never held a monopoly. Thus what emerged was not a single intellectual center, but a constellation of centers that were in competition with one another and were, at the same time, infusing their ideals on the peripheral institutions.

The greatest concentration of scientific and scholarly activity was to be found in a relatively small number of institutions: the new universities like Johns

Hopkins, Chicago, and Stanford; the slowly self-transforming, older universities of the East; and the state universities of the Midwest and California. The work undertaken at these centers helped to create an intellectual consensus about what was true and important in a given field, in terms of both substantive issues and methodological problems.

The research and publications of individual faculty members were the basis for the distinction achieved by those institutions that comprised the central constellation. The importance of a given department was frequently the result of the towering accomplishments of one person. The simultaneous elevation of four or five departments within a major branch of learning or eight or ten in a university as a whole made that university into a center sought out by graduate students and professional academics alike.

Columbia University was one such center. In anthropology, for example, it took the lead because the figure of Franz Boas towered above all his colleagues. The department of anthropology at Columbia produced a steady stream of learned publications and distinguished research students. Boas' work was not only an enduring contribution to knowledge; it was also a model for other investigators in the field. Anthropology had existed in the United States before Boas, but the emergence of a department that trained future anthropologists and brought forth men like Kroeber, Lowie, and Sapir, each of whom in his turn became a point of crystallization of anthropological study, transformed the loose "consciousness of kind" into a sense of being part of a discipline of universal validity. Moore and Seligman in economics, Burgess in political science, Dewey in philosophy, Morgan in genetics, Beard and Robinson in history were a few of those who made their departments and Columbia University into an important center of learning.

The University of Chicago was another such center. Moore in mathematics, Michelson and Millikan in physics, Loeb in physiology, Manley in English, Thomas and Park in sociology, Freund and Merriam in political science, Shorey in classics were the individuals whose light was diffused over the rest of their institution. Sociology at Chicago illustrates the role of a leading center of research and training. Sociology was a "movement" of the mind before it became a discipline. As it grew academically a substantive body of literature developed, consolidating the subject and strengthening the sense of identity of its practitioners. The department of sociology of the University of Chicago was a crucial element in the process. Yet "Chicago sociology," like "Columbia anthropology," never monopolized all the activity in its field. It did, however, draw out and emphasize certain themes and techniques, thereby providing a common conception of the substance and methodology of a field through the works that its members produced.

Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University in historical studies, Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Chicago, Columbia, and Wisconsin in economics performed similar roles. In the social sciences as in other subjects, the development of

academic departments transformed heterogeneous and somewhat inchoate bodies of intellectual activities and beliefs into disciplines.

Of course, centers did not always remain centers. Within the central constellation particular institutions waxed and waned, while some of the lesser universities became independent centers in their own right, each sharing and reinforcing the common culture of a field and developing its own distinctive features. The important element was not the specific composition of the constellation but rather its very existence. Its emergence helped to make the academic order into a community—a necessary condition of the ascendancy of academia in the order of learning.

The sense of community was nurtured by movements within the central constellation and between the central and the concentric peripheral circles. An American student seldom pursued his graduate studies at the same institution at which he had taken his bachelor's degree. If he succeeded in entering the academic profession, he rarely began his career at the same university at which he had taken his advanced degree; as he progressed, he moved from one university to another. American universities did not have the degree of "inbreeding" that was characteristic of the British universities; the greater egalitarianism of American society permitted a young man trained at the center to settle more easily into an institution a little removed from it than appears to have been the case in Britain at that time. The movement of academics among universities was further facilitated by the fact that student bodies, the number of available teaching posts, and the number of universities themselves were growing more rapidly in America than elsewhere.

These movements consolidated the collective self-image of the academic order and the position of the central constellation within it. Academics came to believe that they were part of a mighty regiment, somewhat distinct from the rest of American society—contributing to it, criticizing it, supported by it, and harassed by it. They also saw themselves as separate from the other intellectual institutions of the learned and the literary worlds—from industrial laboratories and governmental scientific service with which they had only irregular contact and from the world of artists and literary men with whom they had very little interchange, even in New York and Chicago. Finally, they were united by a common universe of discourse that was sustained, in large measure, by the preponderance of scholarly work emanating from the central constellation. Although separated by fields and specialization within fields, by the end of the century, scientists and scholars could still be bound together across institutional boundaries by reading common bodies of scientific and scholarly literature which originated primarily from within the university.

Moreover, it was the universities themselves that increasingly became the source of most scientific and scholarly publications. In the last years of the nineteenth century, universities that had already achieved a position at the center of the academic order further strengthened their ascendancy by establishing

scholarly publishing houses. The presses of The Johns Hopkins University, the University of Chicago, Cornell University, Columbia University, Harvard University, and the University of California were initially organs for the publication of works, including multi-volumed series and journals, written and edited by teachers at these institutions. Series such as the Johns Hopkins Studies in History and Political Science, the Columbia University Studies in Public Law and Political Science, and the Harvard Oriental Series offered the newer members of the various disciplines a ready opportunity to bring their research results to a wider audience; they also underscored the identification of these younger scholars with the institutions where they were trained and where some held appointments. By coupling the scholarly and scientific eminence of the institutions and departments with the names of particular scholars, these publications thickened the lines that defined the centers and linked them to the periphery.

The academic press was also an important element in making the university the focal point of scientific and scholarly communications. The transactions and proceedings of those academies that managed to survive in this period could not compete with the specialized learned journals emanating from the universities and published by university presses, scientific and scholarly societies, and sometimes by commercial enterprises under academic editorship. Industrial research, insofar as it existed, likewise contributed little to the flow of learned communications. In the particular fields in which they specialized, independent museums such as the Field Museum and the American Museum of Natural History produced works which were read and respected. Some of the governmental scientific services, such as the Bureau of Ethnology, published reports which became part of the standard literature of their subjects.

Taken as a whole, however, it was the publications arising in the universities and produced by university publishing houses that dominated the network of scientific and scholarly communication. In short, the universities were not only filling up much of the world of learning; they were also expanding its space.

VII

Beneath the widespread recognition of the legitimacy of disciplines as universally valid bodies of knowledge, there remained a sensitive institutional parochialism within the American academic profession. Like all loyalties to a collectivity, allegiance to a scholarly institution was not an emotion expressed with equal force by all academics. Young, recently recruited teachers could not be expected to feel the same degree of loyalty to their university as those who had long been members of the faculty and had risen to prominence by office, seniority, and accomplishment attained in "their" university or college. Although an emulative pride and sensitivity about the reputation and good name of a college or university had existed even before the "cognitive revolution" that spread and deepened after the Civil War, sentiments of loyalty on the part of a president and faculty

were heightened by the standing of their university as a center of scientific and scholarly endeavor.

When William Rainey Harper was founding and presiding over the University of Chicago, his aim was to establish an institution that while specifically "American," would be in the same class as the German universities. Daniel Coit Gilman set a similar goal for Johns Hopkins. The presidents bore the responsibility for making their universities as "great" as they could be while the professors wanted to make their own departments "the best." For the former, "greatness" meant not only intellectual accomplishment but also public reputation and the financial benefits of such a reputation. The desire of a group of professors to build a great department might have been intertwined with personal vanity and corporate pride. It was clear, however, that their aspirations could be realized only through the production of distinguished scientific and scholarly work addressed to other scientists and scholars in the United States and abroad, most of whom were by then associated with universities. In these circumstances, self-awareness of the academic status of the intellectual world and of the hierarchy of center and periphery became acute.

Ultimately, eminence in the larger academic order was based on the achievements of departments: for individual teachers, this meant their own departments; for the president and some professors, it meant many departments within the university. Yet great departments could not be created without financial support. Before the First World War, the largest portion of funds for research came not from patrons outside the universities but from the internal budget of the university. As university presidents came to recognize the extent to which intellectual achievement aided them in building their institutions, they became increasingly willing to support the appointment of distinguished faculty. Of course, many scholars and scientists who were less than eminent had to be hired to provide the routine teaching of various subjects, but at the level of professorships, proud and aspiring presidents placed resources at the disposal of their more ambitious and successful departments to enable them to attract the best scholars and scientists available. Departments and universities that were content to do more than "fill the slots" allotted to them sank in the hierarchy; such was the fate of institutions with more limited resources or those in which emulative institutional patriotism was weak. Although these universities were not necessarily devoid of outstanding departments, they "contracted out" of the race and accepted their peripherality.

Only a small number of universities had both the individuals and the resources needed to bring them to the forefront of the American academic order. These few were determined to live up to the German standard, not only to benefit students who would be instructed and inspired by the most outstanding workers in their respective fields, not only to stimulate faculty through contacts with distinguished colleagues, but also to satisfy the personal pride of the president and the leading professors who sought the distinction of association with a "great" department and a "great" university.

The effort to be among the best of institutions or departments was spurred by the growing prominence of research. As long as universities and colleges confined themselves to teaching, to the formation of character and the "molding of men," they were visible only locally and to those who had direct contact with them. Few easily and widely recognized marks of accomplishment resulted from such pedagogical activities. However, achievements in research were discernible not so much by the general public as by the public consisting of other workers in the same or related fields. Colleagues at other universities were more effectively present in the minds of those academics who did research than was the case with those whose affections were given in the first instance to teaching. The audience of the latter was the student body, locally circumscribed; the audience for the former was national and international.

Indeed the emergence of central and peripheral universities was conditional on the existence of translocal scholarly and scientific communities. These national communities and the organizations and organs through which they were given form aided the comparison and assessment of scientific and scholarly production. Through publication of the results of research, academics and their works were placed on a stage that enhanced their visibility. Evaluations of individual works and their authors were consolidated into assessments of departments and entire institutions. The result was a stratification of works, individuals, departments, and institutions. Some individuals withdrew from the competition and some never entered it. Others, at or nearer to the center, were sensitive to their reputation and were close enough to distinction to believe in the value of such prominence. This belief was especially apparent when appointments were about to be made, and there was an opportunity to raise the prestige of one's university by attracting a distinguished scientist or scholar.

The ranking of universities in a national hierarchy was affected by the deliberate efforts of university presidents and professors to maintain or raise the status of their institution. It was in this period that American university teachers and administrators developed the policy of "going after" a man, of making a deliberate effort to bring to their universities the best, or prospectively best, scholars and scientists. The practice of *Berufung* had long been in use in Germany when it was taken up in the United States. The new universities tried to win to their service the best of the newer men at the older universities. It was relatively easy for Johns Hopkins, Chicago, and Stanford to leap to the forefront while other universities in the country were slumbering and ambitious and talented younger persons were suffering from the restraints imposed upon them by their more traditional institutions. But the older universities rallied; they made efforts to satisfy those who wished to do research and to bring back the best of those they had lost.

The dynamics of American universities determined to enhance their reputation and hence to build their intellectual and material fortunes stood in marked contrast to the practice of the older English universities that were so confident of their superiority that they had no need to exert any effort to attract the leading

scientists and scholars. In Great Britain the pattern of an academic career from the 1870s to the First World War was relatively simple: graduate from Oxford, Cambridge, or London; obtain an appointment for a time at one of the provincial universities like Manchester or Liverpool; and then, for those who reached the highest eminence, return as professors to Oxford, Cambridge, or London. The provincial universities could compete only for scholars or scientists who had not yet reached the peak of accomplishment; in attracting persons of great distinction, all the advantages lay with the three universities in the South. The vice-chancellors of Britain's modern universities either did not have or did not choose to exercise the powers of American university presidents.

No such predetermined path or unchanging hierarchy existed in the United States. In this sense, the American academic order more closely resembled that of Germany. The Prussian Minister of Education, Friedrich Althoff, was much like an American university president in his solicitous intrusiveness. In some of the German states, the initiative was borne by a few senior professors who sought to attract to their universities the best men available anywhere in Germany. (They were the beneficiaries of a tradition inherited from the time of the princely states when rulers vied with one another for the greater glory of possessing an eminent university.)

There was nothing comparable to the American or German system in France, where the Sorbonne so far outdistanced the universities of the provinces that the latter could do little more than reconcile themselves to their inferior status. Only the University of Toulouse once sought to break out of that condition and, in the end, its efforts were unsuccessful. As a consequence—and despite the fact that the national university system was a legal reality—the stimulus of institutional emulation was absent. The preponderance of the *grandes écoles*, the Collège de France, and the *Ecole pratique des hautes études* prevented the universities from attaining the ascendancy in France that they secured in the United States, Germany, and to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom.

Emulation was an essential motivating force in the shifting status of American academic institutions. Yet none of the emulative actions of the American universities would have occurred had presidents and professors not expressed both a passionate attachment to their universities and departments and a jealous concern for their personal reputations. Here was a parochiality that was perfectly compatible with intellectual attachment to scientific and scholarly communities extending far beyond the boundaries of individual universities.

VIII

The story of the ascension of the universities is not one of even and unimpeded progress along a single front. There were contrary movements in public opinion and within the learned world against the dominance of the universities, and against the major universities that were the most visible parts of the academic dominance. The universities were criticized by radicals for being too subservient

to the earthly powers and by conservatives for being too critical of them; they were criticized by "practical" men for concentrating on interests too remote from the ordinary business of daily life and by men of letters for being too close to it. Members of more rustic universities criticized the universities of the Eastern seaboard. Specialization and narrowness, utilitarianism, triviality and the "ivory tower," the reactionary support of capitalism and irresponsible radicalism, and excessive secularism and piety were among the charges leveled against the universities.

There was a kernel of truth in all these accusations. The American universities were sometimes subservient to external powers who charged that university teachers taught doctrines subversive of existing institutions and arrangements. The cases of Edward Ross at Stanford, Scott Nearing at Pennsylvania, Louis Levine at Montana, and Charles Beard and James McKeen Cattell at Columbia indicate that these criticisms were not baseless. At the same time, the universities were also hospitable to stringent critics of the existing order, such as John Dewey, Richard Ely, Simon Patten, and their numerous intellectual progeny, whose ideas contributed markedly to the collectivist transformation of American society in the half-century following World War I. Those businessmen and publicists who thought that "the universities" were preaching "socialism" exaggerated, but they were not wholly off the mark. In addition, the American universities performed a variety of trivial activities ranging from semicommercial football spectacles and numerous practical programs with little respectable intellectual content to worthy but distracting activities in extramural teaching and service. Yet in the half-century between the Civil War and the end of the First World War, these criticisms and diversions did not deflect the universities from the course on which they had been launched by the zeal for learning of the "Germany-returned" generation and by attendant circumstances in the structure of knowledge and society. They withstood critics, opponents, and rivals and developed, among other things, economic theory, oriental studies, sociology, genetics, theoretical physics, and the most recondite branches of mathematics.

Successful as the universities were in gaining intellectual dominion over alternative modes of organization for the cultivation—both discovery and transmission—of learning, they were less successful in their relation with alternative modes of thought and expression. Whereas their organizational rivals fell into the places "to which they had been called by God," their intellectual rivals did not readily accept the preeminence of the universities. Academics, amateurs, librarians, officials of learned societies, directors of independent research institutions, and scientists employed by the government took the ascendancy of the universities with good grace. Priests and clergy, bohemians, socialists, literary men and artists, mystics, and devotees of the occult were not so easily reconciled. However, the opposition was never unified, even within each of its constituent currents. Neither the fundamentalist Christian nor the populist rivals could forge a united front because their numbers were so prevalent within the universities. The radicals and bohemians were held at arms length, discouraged from entering

the universities or extruded from them if they did succeed in gaining entrance. A few novelists and poets could be found on university faculties, although their tasks were to do research and to teach from the general body of learning. Likewise the mystics and pantheists in the university were directly engaged in science and scholarship. Artistic expression and communion with the deity did not fall within the terms of reference of the university; those who practiced them had to do so avocationally.

The profession of letters would have been in more severe conflict with the universities but for a spontaneously achieved division of labor. Academics studied literature historically and philologically, in a scholarly way; they edited texts and wrote historical works about genres, traditions, epochs and authors of the past. Men of letters were primarily concerned with contemporary authors and their writings. As long as men of letters, such as Ellery Sedgwick of the *Atlantic Monthly* and Paul Elmer More of Princeton, were still predominantly devoted to the genteel tradition, there was a truce or alliance. Novelists seldom treated the subjects dealt with by university faculties. The break came first in the outer areas of the republic of letters. But by 1920 the members of university departments of English and modern languages and literature had begun to turn their attention to contemporary works. Men of letters, particularly H. L. Mencken, became aggressively scornful of universities and of university teachers. The result was a conflict between the academics who generally disdained "modern" literature and the men of letters who generally supported it. Students of literature within the universities, although much criticized from outside, were themselves critical of specific features of the universities. Some of them bitterly attacked the scientific and scholarly side of university activity.

At Harvard, Irving Babbitt was a scholar who belonged to the ascendant academic order, but he was hostile toward the scientism and utilitarianism that he saw in the universities. He shared his antiutilitarianism with the exponents of the genteel tradition who did not approve of the research activities of the graduate schools and who were committed to the undergraduate schools. It was the survivors of the genteel tradition who became the defenders of "the humanities" within the universities and continued their defensiveness against science, technology, and the social sciences.

In literature, unlike religion, the external critics of the university were ultimately victorious—although not in the period before World War I. First, scholarship triumphed over the genteel tradition and then after the Second World War, scholarship itself was shaken by "modernism," which ended by bringing the bohemian outlook into the universities. But that story belongs to a later chapter.

In the end, the severity of their critics, internal and external, did not deter the universities from the course set by Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago. Columbia and Harvard regrouped their forces and moved in the same direction as did Yale. They were joined by Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and the University of California; the Universities of Illinois, Wisconsin,

sin, and Indiana were scarcely behind their sister institutions in the Midwest and West.

What propelled the university movement was a drift of opinion toward the appreciation of knowledge, particularly knowledge of a scientific character. There was general agreement that knowledge could be accepted as knowledge only if it rested on empirical evidence, rigorously criticized and rationally analyzed, and that this kind of knowledge was worthy of all the effort and resources required to attain it. Great businessmen, leading state politicians as well as a few major national politicians, important publicists and, in a vague way, much of the electorate joined in the appreciation of this kind of knowledge and of the university as its proper organ. The universities were supported because they performed a dual function: they infused knowledge into the young who would apply it in their professions and whose lives would be illuminated by its possession, and they contributed to the improvement of the stock of knowledge, penetrating further and further into the nature of reality. The knowledge that was appreciated was secular knowledge which continued the mission of sacred knowledge, complemented it, led to it, or replaced it; fundamental, systematically acquired knowledge was thought in some way to be a step toward redemption. This kind of knowledge held out the prospect of the transfiguration of life by improving man's control over the resources of nature and the powers that weaken his body; it offered the prospect of a better understanding of society that, it was felt, would lead to the improvement of society. It was thought that the progress of mankind entailed the improvement of understanding simply as a state of being and not solely as an instrument of action. The honor and the glory of a country that promoted the acquisition of such knowledge was assured; its power and influence would grow proportionately and deservedly.

It was this movement of belief that carried forward the universities—a movement to which both leading academics and the leading university administrators subscribed. There were, of course, disagreements on particular points—on the emphasis to be given to theoretical and fundamental knowledge in comparison with practical, useful discoveries, or on the value of immediate intervention into practical affairs as against the postponement or avoidance of intervention until knowledge was sufficiently reliable. Certain studies were sometimes more favored than others because they attracted more financial support or at least did not discourage it. There were other disagreements too, and not all institutions and subjects moved with equal speed in the same direction. Nonetheless, the movement went on: the centers spreading their influence over the peripheries; the centers competing with each other and sometimes changing places. The universities at the center moved into new spiritual terrain, drawing the rest of the intellectual order with them.

The universities were vouchsafed this vocation because they appeared to be the best imaginable instrument for the performance of the dual cognitive function. They could not only produce more knowledge more reliably and more continuously than any other learned organization, but they could also transmit it, thus

making provision for the persistence of that progress. No other arrangement of intellectual activities could approximate their success in this regard. Universities moved forward over the whole of the legitimate cognitive front. They worked in a way that drew most fruitfully on the cooperation and contributions of numerous individuals and institutions in many countries. Libraries became their instruments, industrial and governmental laboratories their executives. Within the ascendancy of the university community, order was maintained and, kept in movement by the ascendancy of a central constellation of universities over most of the others.

This was the situation at the end of the First World War. Traditions of thought and loyalty had been founded and reinforced in the preceding half century. In the ensuing half century, these traditions and loyalties were to bear fruit, but they were also to be subjected to unprecedented strains precisely because they had been so successful.

Politics, Intellect, and the American University, 1945–1995

BY MOST MEASURES, the half century following World War II has been the “golden age” of the American university.¹ The period was haunted by the bomb, McCarthyism undermined academic freedom, and the Cold War distorted intellectual agendas. Other qualifiers could be named. Yet one cannot but be impressed. The American research university simultaneously adapted and actively furthered a dramatic expansion and significant diversification of its student body and faculty while its research and graduate training capacity was greatly strengthened. It was a remarkable transformation, with both quantity and quality rising. Recognizing new constituencies and opportunities for expansion, universities sought and gained both private and public support. On the government side alone, there was a massive reallocation of resources; between 1950 and 1970 governmental expenditures for higher education rose from \$2.2 billion to \$23.4 billion, and to \$31 billion in 1991.²

There was a pattern of leveling up: by 1970 or so, research and training was no longer dominated by a select few institutions—Chicago and the Ivies. Distinction was as likely to be found in major public institutions (Berkeley, Ann Arbor, Madison) as private ones, though recent developments, since about 1985, threaten to reestablish this divide as major private institutions have gained resources relative to public ones.³ All areas of the country became home to major research institutions, and the number of institu-

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tions with stature as major research and graduate training campuses increased from about twenty to more than 125 in the half century.⁴ But if there has been some leveling at the top among the institutions examined in this inquiry, considerable differentiation still marks the 3,600 institutions of higher education in the United States, where a half million faculty teach. Over the past half century this decentralized system has become nationalized even while remaining differentiated, making difference feel more hierarchical now than in 1940 when institutions, including Harvard, Berkeley, and Princeton, were more local, even parochial in outlook.⁵

Before World War I, many of the most ambitious and talented American scientists and scholars had sought advanced training abroad. During the interwar years, however, the American university became self-sufficient, and the academic leaders of the postwar era were mostly American trained, though in some fields they were significantly influenced by the émigré scientists and scholars who fled European fascism.⁶

The American research establishment had taken form during the interwar years, and postwar developments would build upon these foundations. Two characteristics in particular would have struck visitors from major research centers in Europe. First, there was (and is) the American combination of advanced research and undergraduate teaching in a single institution. Second, visitors would be surprised by the number and diversity of decentralized institutions, each organized more by local opportunity than by national policy. Partly from these two circumstances, there was more space and more opportunity in the American system for innovation and for the incorporation of new disciplines and fields. The fact that change could occur faster and with less bureaucratic conflict in the loosely organized American system would become an advantage in the years of growth after the war.

Before the war, national academic systems were rather insular, but the postwar years witnessed the development of an international scholarly community, sustained in part by exchange programs supported by the United States government (e.g., Fulbright scholarships) and major foundations. In the natural sciences, where resources were so important, the United States came to dominate this internationalized research environment, but there was an im-

portant international role for the United States in the social sciences, especially in sociology (briefly) and economics (continuing). More recently, the end of the Cold War has promoted a new level of international visibility for American academic experts, and in a broader context the advent of global academic communication has been both advanced and dominated by American research and scholarship.

The quantity and quality of American research cannot be measured with any precision, but some crude indicators are available. For example, 80 percent of all citations in electronic retrieval systems are in English.⁷ And the awarding of Nobel Prizes indicates an increasing recognition of American research: before 1946, one in seven Nobel Prizes went to Americans, while between 1946 and 1975 Americans received one in two.⁸ Notwithstanding the attention given to a few French ideas recently imported into the United States, American research universities are massive exporters of research and importers of graduate students, mostly in science but also more generally. With no intention of trivializing the matter, one can say that only American scholarship, research, and advanced training have the international stature and appeal of American movies, popular music, software, and basketball.

Yet the public has taken little notice of this success; indeed, in a spirit of disappointment Americans may even be initiating its dismantling. Within academe, moreover, there is a pervasive sense of unease, and the origins of this self-doubt precede the current financial crisis of higher education. In fact, there is a certain paradox in the success of academe. Its recognized achievements (disciplinary excellence in the context of dramatic expansion) have not strengthened academic culture as a whole. It has even produced conflicts about its mission, particularly its civic role, and there has been a weakening of the informal compact between the university and society.

Academe is also a victim of larger transformations in American society. The incorporation of higher learning into the center of American established institutions, including the government, has enhanced the university, but it has also made it vulnerable to a larger disaffection with those institutions. Universities have also been focal points (and sometimes at the leading edge) for increasingly controversial efforts to overcome racial and sexual injustices.

The most compelling aspirations of the universities—whether one speaks of advanced scholarship or progressive social interventions—have prompted more criticism than congratulation.

What follows is a brief and necessarily selective elaboration of the phases and contexts of change in American academic culture. It highlights some of the more important social, intellectual, and political trends that have intersected and affected the trajectory of academe's ascent and apparent loss of standing.

MAKING THE GOLDEN AGE

The period following World War II was one of two great moments of academic reform in the United States—the other coming after the Civil War, when the sixty-seven land grant colleges were created and the modern American research university was established. In the half century following the founding of The Johns Hopkins University in 1876, educational leaders augmented a substantial university system in the United States. But it still fell short of the highest ambitions of the research community, a point underscored in Abraham Flexner's scathing report of 1930 on the universities of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.⁹ Twenty years later a major appraisal of the state of American scholarship praised progress but saw most of it as very recent. Prewar social science and humanities research, it seemed in 1953, was too often marked and marred by "fact-finding," "over-specialization," and "trivial investigations."¹⁰ Moreover, the style of academic life had begun to change since the war. A genteel profession became more diverse and worldly. Postwar academics were less gentlemanly and more professionally ambitious, fired by aspirations to upward mobility.

There was a strong sense that the postwar era would demand more from universities, both as teaching and as research institutions. Harvard commissioned a study of its curriculum, producing, in 1945, *General Education in a Free Society*, otherwise known as the famous "Red Book." Two years later the President's Commission on Higher Education presented its multivolume report, *Higher Education for a Democracy* (1947). Both envisioned an expansion of education: more students and wider responsibilities for the future direction of society. The Red Book made a case for studying

science and the texts of the European humanist tradition, associating them with freedom and democracy. This argument, framed against the backdrop of fascism and communism, preserved a role for history and the historical disciplines in a blueprint for a higher education oriented to contemporary concerns. The President's Commission pointedly criticized economic and racial barriers to equal education, and the language was strong enough on the issue of racial injustice to prompt several commissioners, including the scientist Arthur H. Compton and historian Douglas S. Freeman, to note their dissent. The report was attentive to the diversity of the American people, and it urged reforms that would make higher education responsive to their various needs and interests but at the same time committed to a curriculum sufficiently unified to nourish a common culture and citizenship. The report explained that "liberal education," the lineage of which was distinctly aristocratic, must be converted into its democratic counterpart, "general education," which is "directly relevant to the demands of contemporary society."¹¹

The next half century would witness the predicted expansion of access to higher education, but it is not clear that university faculty expected to make much accommodation to these changes, nor does it appear that any special needs or aspirations of these new students were considered by the faculty and administration. The faculty of elite institutions provided the vision for the Golden Age of the postwar university, and its priorities reflected their interests.¹² Between 1940 and 1990, federal funds for higher education increased by a factor of twenty-five, enrollment by ten, and average teaching loads were reduced by half.¹³

The nationalization of higher education tended to establish a single standard for excellence—the model of the major research university. Ernest Boyer complained that just when American higher education opened itself to a larger and more diverse student body, "the culture of the professoriate was becoming more hierarchical and restrictive."¹⁴ This process seems also to have advanced a growing commitment to (and internalization of) meritocratic standards. Family backgrounds, regional loyalties, and ethnic backgrounds generally counted for less, and the universities became the principal carriers of the universalistic values then described as "modern."¹⁵ One must recognize the historical incorporation of

these values into the core meaning of the university to understand the threat presented by supposed challenges to them today. Much that seems upsetting today might have been less provocative to the interwar American university.¹⁶

Faculty values—research opportunities, better colleagues, better students, greater autonomy—drove university development and established the standards by which universities were judged and ranked, at least those universities that aspired to distinction (and in a nationally competitive market, more and more were urged toward such aspirations). The goal of raising academic standards in appointments tended to empower elite scholars and departments over administrators, and it reduced the claim of institutional or local particularities. Indeed, the historian Richard Freeland argues that “the central constituencies of the academic culture were the scholarly disciplines and the learned societies they sponsored, for it was these groups that could confer a reputation for excellence.”¹⁷ So radical was this transformation that Christopher Jencks and David Riesman called it, in the title of their book of 1968, *The Academic Revolution*.

This pattern of change freed faculty for a stronger research orientation, and it enabled a firmer sense of academic autonomy and disciplinary professionalism. Whereas the Red Book had asked philosophers to investigate and teach “the place of human aspirations and ideals in the total scheme of things,” the postwar discipline, embracing the inward-looking and donnish analytical movement, eschewed such a civic role. In retrospect it appears that the disciplines were redefined over the course of the half century following the war: from the means to an end they increasingly became an end in themselves, the possession of the scholars who constituted them. To a greater or lesser degree, academics sought some distance from civics. The increasingly professionalized disciplines were embarrassed by moralism and sentiment; they were openly or implicitly drawn to the model of science as a vision of professional maturity.¹⁸

The proper work of academics became disciplinary development and the training of students for the discipline. The authors of the Red Book recognized this possibility and pointed out that “one of the subtlest and most prevalent effects of specialism has been that. . . subjects have tended to be conceived and taught with an

eye. . . to their own internal logic rather than their larger usefulness to students.”¹⁹ Talcott Parsons, who taught at Harvard, reflected the dominant mood in an address to the American Sociological Association in 1959. He argued that as a scientific discipline sociology “is clearly primarily dedicated to the advancement and transmission of empirical knowledge” and only “secondarily to the communication of such knowledge to non-members.”²⁰

The transformation of academic culture was possible, in part, because the onset of the Cold War mobilized the state to invest heavily in research and scholarship, especially in science and in area studies.²¹ One of the great developments of the postwar university, in fact, was the academic enclosure of international studies, which had earlier been widely distributed among missionaries, journalists, and travel writers, and international business.²²

But the needs of the Cold War state were not the only reasons for investment in higher education. The postwar years were marked by an awareness of expanding resources and a level of abundance that would permit massive investment in the universities, especially the biggest and best ones. After a decade of scarcity, the GNP grew over 100 percent between 1939 and 1945. There was a sharp but brief dip in economic growth between 1945 and 1947, but the rebuilding of Europe and the building of a permanent war economy sustained growth almost without interruption for two decades. The titles of two widely read books capture the mood: David Potter’s *People of Plenty* (1954), followed by John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (1958).²³

It is difficult today to grasp the magnitude of the infusion of new funds into the university, especially the most select research universities, in the quarter-century following World War II. By far, the greater portion of these investments went to the natural sciences and engineering, but substantial funding went to the social sciences, and this support may well have artificially sustained a very high level of professional development and a sense of autonomy. For the period from 1946 to 1958, foundation support for academic social science amounted to more than \$85 million, 48 percent of which went to three institutions (Harvard, Columbia, and Berkeley).²⁴ Between 1959 and 1964, the big three foundations (Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie) bestowed nearly \$100

million on political science departments, half of which went to the same three institutions.²⁵

But it was not only applied knowledge nor international studies nor politically useful knowledge that was supported. Theoretical work in both the natural and social sciences was nourished, as was humanistic scholarship. Indeed, postwar Americans were newly sympathetic to the claims of scholarship and art, a point noted at the time by the critic Lionel Trilling.²⁶ The depression had discredited the business elite, who had historically been a major source of anti-intellectualism in the United States.²⁷ Intellectuals inside and outside of the government gained status, partly because of the policy success of Keynesian economics, an academic theory of acknowledged utility.

In the twenty years following World War II, American intellectuals, according to Edward Shils, were welcomed into the centers of American power and influence.²⁸ Americans had become vastly more receptive to what Clark Kerr in 1963 called the university's "invisible product, knowledge."²⁹ Policy studies were developed in major university institutes, but the less practical disciplines were supported as well, as evidence of the cultural achievements of a new world power. John F. Kennedy symbolized this new sensibility, both for the technocrats he brought into his administration and for his apparent cultural sophistication. His interest in art and intellect implied a qualitative liberalism that led to the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in 1965.

The new and broadened respect for humanistic learning was important, but the idea of research was especially associated with science. Much of science's appeal derived from its promise of new technologies and economic development, a mantra regularly invoked by university presidents before state legislators. It was a successful strategy in the short run, but over time it left science and the research university vulnerable. Quite unexpectedly, it invited radical critics of the 1960s to blame the university for society's ills and for complicity in the war. Conservatives, who had always had reservations about state support for research except for that in the defense-related category, grew increasingly skeptical. By the 1980s public support had seriously eroded, with serious consequences not only for science but for the standing of academic research in general.

Reference to the G.I. Bill is commonplace in discussions of the expansion of higher education, and I must reiterate its importance here. In 1947–1948, the Veterans Administration paid the tuition for almost half the male college students in the United States, and by 1962 higher education had received \$5 billion from that source on behalf of veterans of World War II and the Korean War.³⁰ Mostly due to the impact of the G.I. Bill, the number of college students doubled between 1938 and 1948. Those who recall the Quonset huts on college campuses will have a sense of the true magnitude of this population increase. But it was an opportunity as well, making new resources available, especially to public universities. The G.I. Bill paid out-of-state tuition rates for soldiers no matter what their residence. This produced windfalls for many universities, especially the University of California, which in 1947–1948 took in more than \$12 million from out-of-state fees. That surplus revenue, combined with the general growth of the California economy, supplied Robert Sproul and Clark Kerr with the unrestricted financial resources that enabled them to leverage Berkeley to the premier position it had achieved by 1960.³¹

But enrollment was driven by other forces as well: a new awareness of the value of college degrees and the prosperity to sustain the ambitions of an expanding middle class. The rate of the rise in college enrollment kept accelerating. Between 1960 and 1980 the number of college students tripled, the largest percentage increase since the period from 1875 to 1895, the first era of massive educational reform.³² The magnitude of this increase no doubt accounts in part for the strains within the university and between the university and society.

Not only did the numbers of students increase, but so did the range of their social backgrounds. Enrollments had been increasing since the late nineteenth century, but as recently as 1940, the student body of American higher education remained largely upper middle class in origin. Only after the war did American higher education become a mass phenomenon, increasing its representative character every decade thereafter. If our campuses as a whole still fail to be genuinely representative, urban campuses, even of elite research institutions, come close. By the 1970s, the changes in class origins, gender ratios, race, and ethnicity were beginning to transform the culture of the university, even as the university

expanded the cultural resources available to increasingly diverse cohorts of students.

As universities grew and moved to the center of American society, so did the professoriate and intellectuals generally.³³ Indeed, the 1950s witnessed considerable self-consciousness among intellectuals. Aware of themselves as a rising class, they wrote endlessly about the role and status of intellectuals in the United States. This enhanced position coexisted with a worry that mass society would provide no home for serious intellect.³⁴ Intellectuals often portrayed themselves as beleaguered, seeking a haven in a hostile world, and they defended the university as a free space for intellect. With the rise of McCarthyism, such defensiveness and the need for this sort of safe place in universities became all the more important; Richard Hofstadter responded by writing a history of academic freedom that emphasized its legitimacy and importance in the McCarthy era.³⁵

POSTWAR CULTURE

The immediate postwar mood in the United States was one of relief, but it was not a period of relaxation. There was an undercurrent of uncertainty, even terror. The bomb, the specter of an expanding communism, and the ever-present preparation for war transformed the conditions of life. Was the United States, even if more worldly and more powerful, up to the challenges of the era? Public policy and private aspirations both pointed to the promotion of a consumer society, marked by a landscape of corporations, suburbs, and shopping centers that redefined middle-class life. While science offered progress, many worried; while modernity beckoned, there was a pervasive sense of alienation in this new world, something evident in the most notable literature and painting of the period.

Even as Americans embraced a bright and shiny world of consumer products, American intellectuals became more sensitive to the problem of evil than at any time since the seventeenth century. It was almost predictable that Perry Miller, the distinguished Harvard professor of American literature, would in 1949 publish an intellectual biography of Jonathan Edwards that self-consciously made him a contemporary, or that the neo-orthodox theologian Reinhold

Niebuhr would become a beacon for a new “realism” in American liberal thought, even for many nonbelievers.³⁶ More generally, literary studies rediscovered and celebrated those American writers, particularly Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, who challenged American optimism, who were sensitive to the power of blackness, and who expressed a tragic sense of life. Freud, who had been misinterpreted in the 1920s as a proponent of sexual liberation, became for intellectuals in the 1950s a darker Freud, the Freud who wrote *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).³⁷

From one perspective, the postwar years are notable for a revival of religion. Among intellectuals Reinhold Niebuhr exerted enormous influence, and at a more popular level church membership was growing rather dramatically. Yet it was also a moment of triumphant secularism in the academy, and by the end of the 1970s the secularism and liberalism of the educated classes and the religiosity of other, less cosmopolitan Americans marked a major fault line in American culture and politics that would be manifest in the political and cultural conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s.³⁸

It is too easy to overlook how deeply encompassing Christian academic culture was before 1945. We remember T. S. Eliot’s literary prescriptions, but we should also recall his important political intervention in 1940, with a small book on *The Idea of a Christian Society*.³⁹ The academic humanities were the possession of Christians in the 1940s. Lionel Trilling’s appointment in English at Columbia in the late 1930s was highly unusual, and before World War II there were no Jews in any Yale College department. In the context of what David Hollinger has denoted a *Kulturkämpfe* in the United States, scientists and others mobilized in the 1940s against an aggressive and worrisome religious resistance to science, modernity, and cosmopolitanism. It was with such dangers from religious as well as political ideologies in mind that Robert Merton, Sidney Hook, and other secularists sought to establish a cluster of modern, Enlightenment values: science, democracy, cosmopolitanism.⁴⁰

All of this would change after 1945. American intellectual culture, academic and literary, would be de-Christianized.⁴¹ There were rapidly growing religious movements that had significant potential, later realized, for anti-intellectual hostility to the arts and to academic culture, but in 1950, a secular and scientific

culture was established in the American university, enough so that William F. Buckley could make a mark attacking it.⁴² Protestant dominance within the faculties of American research universities and elite colleges, especially in the humanities, was dissolved by a dramatic influx of Jewish scholars and scientists and, much later, a smaller influx of Catholics.

In 1936, on its three hundredth anniversary, Harvard altered its university seal, dropping *Christo et Ecclesiae*, leaving only *Veritas*, with three open books. The change signaled the progress of a secular, scientific understanding of knowledge. Heretofore, whether formally articulated or not, religion had provided the moral authority and basis of cultural unity for higher education, even for the new research universities. But by the middle third of the twentieth century, it was assumed that the university would be held together by the ideal of inquiry, which would unify scholars investigating the whole domain of knowledge. This vision was not new; it had been articulated in the United States by Harvard's Charles W. Eliot in the late nineteenth century. But the context was new; now academic culture was thoroughly secular. Under such circumstances, as Julie Reuben has recently argued, the idea of research lacked the capacity to provide the unifying authority to sustain an academic culture that amounted to more than the aggregate of autonomous disciplines.⁴³ Indeed, it may even be, as she suggests, that this combination of secularization and specialization paved the way at Harvard and elsewhere for the introduction of a formalism in philosophy and other disciplines that fostered a separation of method from a substantive ethics.

The increasing emphasis on scientific method and objectivity, along with a shrinking menu of social questions to be examined, derived in part from the advent of substantial foundation support for the social sciences in the interwar years. To an extent, the emphasis upon objectivity represented an obvious caution about offending powerful donors. But it served scholars in a deeper way: it legitimated political interventions by denying any political character to the act. "If their findings were morally neutral, objective descriptions of institutional and human functions," as Edward Purcell has written, then social scientists did not have to face the question of value or take responsibility for the "actual consequences" of their interventions.⁴⁴

The growth of federal support, beginning with the establishment of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1950, led to the elevation of peer review to a sacred level.⁴⁵ The policy of peer review protected the academic freedom of scholars and shielded foundations, the NSF, and, later, the National Endowments from criticism. But, by privileging audiences of peers, this development encouraged a focus on the model of science, an emphasis on method, and a narrowness of reference in social studies and humanistic scholarship. The unintended but distinct long-term effect of this reorientation of research authorized disciplinary (even subdisciplinary) autonomy and a certain distancing of academic work from society at large. By the 1990s this structure of self-governance by peers would be characterized in important sectors of the larger public as elitist and irresponsible, and it became the focus of attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts and, to a lesser extent, the National Endowment for the Humanities.

A sense that ideology had made the first half of the twentieth century an age of disaster encouraged a quest for certainty at mid-century. Much as Descartes had been driven to secure a ground for absolute knowledge in the aftermath of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and in the midst of the religious wars of the seventeenth century, intellectuals in the mid-twentieth century, witnesses of war and totalitarian ideologies, may have been drawn to epistemologies of certainty as an antidote. One can imagine, as Stephen Toulmin has, that in such circumstances the dream of certain knowledge as an alternative to ideology, perhaps even to politics, would have an appeal.⁴⁶ This impulse is clear in philosophy, political science, and economics; the case of literary studies is more complex, for the New Criticism combined a quest for analytical precision with a hostility to the science from which this program derived its cultural value.

By 1950 the intolerance generated by McCarthyism and the Cold War moved academics and intellectuals generally to make themselves and their work less vulnerable to attack. For example, Marx was replaced by Freud, the word “capitalism” dropped out of social theory after the war,⁴⁷ and class became stratification. Economics, in its Keynesian and consumerist emphases, was oriented to growth and consumption, turning away from reform and distribution questions.⁴⁸ The creation of the Department of Social

Relations at Harvard in 1946, under the leadership of Talcott Parsons, was an important interdisciplinary initiative, but it also marked a revealing shift in academic outlook, one exemplified by Parsons himself: his interests shifted from history and political economy to sociology, cultural anthropology, and psychology, especially psychoanalysis. Interest in transformative theories of society, in short, waned.

More broadly, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., staked out a progressive position that was clearly distinguishable from Marxism and communism. In *The Vital Center* (1949), he articulated an ideology of freedom that promoted liberal internationalism and domestic reform.⁴⁹ But his tract was not quite a clarion call of Enlightenment optimism. Acknowledging the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr's neo-orthodox thought, he stressed human limits. History, as he saw it in 1949, "is not a redeemer, promising to solve all human problems in time; nor is man capable of transcending the limitations of his being. Man is generally entangled in unsolvable problems; history is consequently a tragedy in which we are all involved."⁵⁰ Nonetheless, this skeptical or ironic attitude fostered an activist posture in intellectuals committed to the Cold War.

For those who wanted to get on with disciplinary scholarship, such times recommended particular methodologies, more scientific and less engaged. The political scientist David Easton has found in McCarthyism a stimulus for the development of a more scientific and objective political science, for it provided a "protective posture for scholars." It was, he suggests, a gain for political science, even if "for the wrong reasons."⁵¹ But one must be careful in generalizing. A precise sense of chronology and generational succession is needed. For some academics, particularly in the immediate postwar group, talk of method carried a progressive agenda, much as had been the case with the development of the new method of historical economics in the last third of the nineteenth century. But in many cases, increasingly over the postwar decades, the method had its own fascinations.

If such was the path of philosophy and the social sciences toward sharper and more precise models of knowledge, the humanities, or at least parts of history, literary studies, and anthropology, turned in the opposite direction, interestingly, for some of the same reasons. In the face of absolute ideologies, such figures as

Lionel Trilling in literature and Richard Hofstadter in history stressed the extraordinary complexity of social life, urging restraint and a sense of the tragic in history.⁵²

Both groups—those seeking simplicity and those stressing complexity—were nervous about the politics of mass democracy. For one group, expertise might obviate excessive participation by the thoughtless masses. The other group, cognizant of totalitarian mass societies in Germany and the Soviet Union and of the worries of émigré scholars about such societies, expressed their distaste for populism, which they demonized, associating it with anti-modern, unrealistic, and intolerant politics.⁵³ More comfortable with elites than with the masses, these quasi-democrats envisioned a moderate pluralism in which negotiation among elites forestalled enthusiastic democracy and promoted sound policy.⁵⁴

The social sciences seemed to hold special promise for addressing the challenges of the postwar era. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, represented both the ambition of social sciences and the hope invested in them.⁵⁵ After Hiroshima, both John Dewey and Robert Maynard Hutchins, combatants on so many educational issues, agreed that social knowledge must now catch up to technological knowledge, with universities taking the lead. Within forty-eight hours of Hiroshima, in an act as comic as it was important, Talcott Parsons and four fellow social scientists submitted a letter to the *Washington Post* asserting that in light of "the startling news of the atomic bomb," the social sciences had a vital role in the now urgent challenge of peace. Human intelligence could solve "human problems as well as . . . those of atomic physics." The letter urged a high-level study to "explore the needs which the social sciences must fill in a world equipped for suicide." Continuing this argument, Parsons later argued successfully for the inclusion of the social sciences in the National Science Foundation.⁵⁶ Parsons did not turn his hand to the study of the atomic age; rather he devoted himself to the development of a discipline of sociology. By outlining a general theory of social action and explanations of social development at the societal scale (modernization theory), he sought to endow the social sciences with the status of the physical sciences.

Other social scientists did, however, turn to the task of describing and understanding contemporary culture. Indeed, the postwar era saw the emergence of the “social-science intellectual,” and David Riesman, senior author of the best-selling *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), became the most widely known. It was specifically as a social scientist that he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1954.⁵⁷ Byron E. Shafer has recently observed that “the immediate postwar years were to be the glory days for the social sciences. . . . They had achieved practical wartime applications; they had acquired new research techniques; they possessed nearly unlimited aspirations. They could finally hope to join the ‘true’ sciences, simultaneously advancing knowledge of social life and addressing real social problems.”⁵⁸ At this golden moment, method and social purpose worked together.

Only later would method and disciplinary development extrude the civic work so central to the historical aspirations of the social sciences, leading to the circumstance recently reported in the *New York Times*: a survey by the American Economic Association found that nearly two-thirds of graduate economics professors consider their calling “too unrelated to the real world.”⁵⁹ It is revealing that no present-day social scientists invite the general interest of intellectuals in the way David Riesman, Ruth Benedict, B. F. Skinner, or even Robert Merton, Talcott Parsons, Daniel Bell, or Edward Shils did in the 1950s.⁶⁰

The end of ideology, a common phrase used to describe the political and intellectual orientation of the 1950s, not only assumed the exhaustion of Marxism in the West, but it implied a shift from historical to analytic, process to structural, economic to culturalist approaches to the study of society and thought. Like the phrase “consensus history,” the end of ideology presumed that the big questions were settled. Political conflict, therefore, would be within a consensus, thus inviting a style of social research in what Robert Merton called the “middle range,” an approach that elaborated on theoretical questions susceptible to rather direct empirical verification.⁶¹ Parsonian social theory, less empirical, similarly assumed a consensus on core values.⁶²

There were similar developments in other disciplines: intense study and theory construction within tight bounds. The New Criticism in English represented, among other things, an increase

in professional ambition and a sharpening of the object of study—the literariness of a work. The analytical turn in philosophy abandoned the discipline’s expansive Deweyan vision, but it promised verifiable and universal truth. In political science, also, behavioralism eschewed ideology and limited context in order to produce remarkably fruitful middle range problems and theory. Economics moved from institutional analysis and description of the economy to rigorous models and the manipulation of massive data sets newly available after the war.

Academic intellect in the 1950s and thereafter increasingly located itself in a larger international arena and began actively to study contemporary societies beyond the Northern Atlantic, but at the same time it turned inward to the study of the United States. While the influx of European émigré scholars Europeanized certain fields to a degree, ranging from political theory to political sociology, musicology, and the history of art, there was a simultaneous proliferation of interdisciplinary American studies programs that later became the staging ground and model for initiatives on behalf of African-American studies, women’s studies, and ethnic studies.⁶³

Gradually, but especially in the past quarter-century, the core intellectual tradition of general education that had earlier been presumed to represent the best of European culture was increasingly supplemented by engagement with the art, ideas, and experience of Americans. This shift partly explains the identification of the university with the society in 1968 and afterward, an association implausible during the interwar years. This blending of the university into society (or vice versa) today provides the context for many of the battles over historical representation and literary canons. The “culture wars” as we know them would not be fought on campus had this Americanization of academic culture not occurred.⁶⁴

A commitment to American nationalism grew stronger and more celebratory as well soon after the war, something noted by historian Merle Curti.⁶⁵ American nationality was distinctive, exceptionalist; it was at once pluralistic and consensual. Myrdal’s famous study of race relations, for example, was built upon a confidence that there was an American consensus, a universally shared American creed. Will Herberg made a similar argument in

his widely read *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1955).⁶⁶ Religious difference need not divide the society, for there was agreement on the idea of religion itself. This complacent and consensual nationalism would be sharply challenged after 1968.

If many leading intellectuals (Reinhold Niebuhr, Arthur Schlesinger, Lionel Trilling, Sidney Hook, George Kennan, and Perry Miller, among others) embraced a humanism marked by a tragic sense, it was also an era of sentimental humanism committed to representing the unity of man. Such was the appeal of Carl Jung's notion of archetype, of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1949),⁶⁷ and of the anthropology of Ruth Benedict. Perhaps the most widely known gesture of this sort was the *Family of Man* exhibition. Organized by Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1954, it broke attendance records at the museum and was seen by more than nine million people over the course of a seven-year government-sponsored international tour. Haunted by the fear of nuclear annihilation (the last segment was a six-by-eight-foot image of the hydrogen bomb), the exhibit acknowledged differences among humans. Yet it was determined, in the words of Edward Steichen, that it would "arrange these pictures so they stress likeness." Otherwise, "we have lost out."⁶⁸

Even with their deep belief in American exceptionalism, or perhaps because of it, educated Americans after the war were quite receptive to European high culture. More than ever before it seemed to belong to Americans, who had, after all, saved Europe. With the expansion of higher education, a larger part of the American elite became familiar with and sympathetic to the European humanist tradition. The Aspen Institute, founded in 1945 by Walter Paepcke, a Chicago businessman who headed the Container Corporation of America, Henry Luce, the founder of the *Time-Life* empire, and Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, provides an example of this superficial Europeanization of American culture. The Institute sought to sustain the value of culture in a commercial society, and it aimed to use art and culture as a salve for a war-torn world. In 1949, it sponsored a festival commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Goethe, a figure who represented the ideal of a cosmopolitan humanist. Such an event, and others like it, were

expected to heighten the stature of American culture, making it commensurate with its postwar international leadership in politics and economics. Aspen also presaged the movement of artists and progressive business leaders who supported the public art movement, the creation of Lincoln Center and similar institutions in other cities, and the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in the early 1960s.⁶⁹

The utterly unexpected challenge to assumptions of political consensus and to the authority of European high culture in the 1960s severely weakened the self-confidence and public standing of the social sciences and humanistic scholarship. Many social scientists, recognizing that they had a strong base in the academy, turned inward, focusing more on the development of their disciplines than upon describing, explaining, and participating in the society around them.⁷⁰

Humanists moved in two directions. Some greatly expanded the domain of the humanities, examining a broader range of cultural expression, while others assumed an increasingly defensive posture. The unstable balance between responsibility for the custody of the tradition of European humanism and the task of cultivating the critical intellect did not survive the 1960s. As early as 1961, in a famous essay entitled "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," Lionel Trilling expressed his concern that the critical side might be pressed too far.⁷¹ By the 1980s the two orientations within the humanities that at their best complemented each other became competing academic ideologies.

TOWARD THE 1960s

The intellectuals of the 1950s had come late to modernism, as Irving Howe once remarked.⁷² But modernism had work to do for Howe's generation. It helped to free art from the contamination of politics, a legacy of the ideological wars of the 1930s, and in the midst of a mass culture that fed upon but threatened to devalue art, modernist claims for the autonomy of art established a categorical difference that intellectuals valued.⁷³ The classic statement of the cultural commitments of these modernists was an essay by Clement Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch," published in the *Partisan Review* in 1939. Greenberg had no problem distinguish-

ing art from pretenders to art or a poem from a non-poem, and he articulated the formal challenges of modernism in his brilliant art criticism in the 1940s and 1950s.

For Greenberg's generation, the work of criticism was to establish "hard and fast cultural distinctions, exclusions, hierarchies." By the 1960s, this austere, formal, and highly intellectualist understanding of art seemed too limited, too constraining. A new generation, less fearful of contamination by the plenitude of cultural expression surrounding them, more sympathetic to a native tradition represented in literature by Walt Whitman rather than Melville, and more liberationist in feeling, looked to a "redemption of the senses."⁷⁴ It was very much in this context that Paul Goodman, Herbert Marcuse, and Norman O. Brown came to be favored intellectuals in the 1960s. Susan Sontag provided the clarifying text in her famous essay, "Notes on Camp," published in 1964,⁷⁵ but there were at the same time a number of other important indicators of change: Allan Ginsberg, Andy Warhol, and the Judson Church minimalists all challenged the categories that had seemed so fundamental in the 1950s.

When Allen Ginsberg, who had graduated from Columbia in 1948, returned a decade later for a reading in McMillin Theatre, the stage was set for delineating the difference between the 1950s and the 1960s. Ginsberg had studied the major texts of European humanism with Lionel Trilling, but he had also discovered a native tradition that began with Walt Whitman. His arrival in the sacred precincts of the humanist tradition was a jolt to the prevailing assumptions at Morningside Heights. Diana Trilling, in a famous account that might have been remembered as an anticipation of Norman Mailer's "New Journalism" had it been on the progressive rather than the reactionary side of the cultural divide, recoiled at the proposition that *Howl* was literature and thus properly sponsored (and certified) by the university.⁷⁶

Once Andy Warhol represented a Brillo box and a Campbell's soup can as art, how could Greenberg's categories stand? On seeing the Brillo box and other works of art by Warhol in 1964, the philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto recognized that art could not be treated simply as a matter of vision, of image. In time, he realized that Warhol, more than Marcel Duchamps, more than anyone else, had forced a fundamental question: what is the na-

ture of art?⁷⁷ Warhol also knowingly challenged the conventional modernist distinction between art and business. “After I did the thing called ‘art,’” he reflected, “I went into business art. . .for business is the best art.”⁷⁸

The group of poets, musicians, artists, and dancers who came together at Judson Memorial Church in 1963 mixed all the arts, creating what later came to be known as performance art. For them the fact of the performing body was more important than any objectified genre. Feeling that all things were possible, there was a playfulness, a mixing of high and low, academic and vernacular, physical and spiritual. They sought, as critic Sally Barnes has written, “to *embody* democracy.”⁷⁹

Such developments in the larger intellectual and artistic culture posed serious challenges to academic culture in general and the humanities in particular. Most of the humanities disciplines are object-focused, and these larger cultural changes, well before Derridean theories of deconstruction entered the academy, put in question the status of the object of humanist inquiry. Moreover, given the rigidity of the categories that defined not only proper objects of inquiry but also disciplinary terrains, the university found it difficult to engage the contemporary culture. By the end of the 1960s the gap between the university and advanced culture had widened to the point of open conflict.

If these changes in the cultural domain threatened to subvert the ways of humanistic scholarship, political developments overwhelmed the social sciences, which had been preoccupied with notions of pluralist consensus and equilibrium models. Such approaches to social analysis had provided no warning that transformative social movements were taking shape. Economics, which had been celebrated for finding the secret of growth, lost some of its luster when the pervasiveness of poverty was discovered in the 1960s. And as the 1960s became the 1970s and the American economy suffered a condition popularly called “stagflation,” economists and the public wondered why their models seemed to lack the capacity to explain what was happening.

Social criticism before 1963 had mostly described the follies of white, middle-class consumers, complaining about suburban life, tailfins on cars, organization men, or “other-directed” moderns. By 1963, when Martin Luther King led the March on Washington,

one can detect a shift marked by Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962) and Nathan Glazer's and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963).⁸⁰ Henceforth the focus of social criticism became class, race, and ethnicity, with issues of gender to follow a decade later. The "rights revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s empowered groups, largely because inequalities were often associated with group designations. It was reasonable for groups suffering discrimination to so organize and identify themselves, but Americans began to worry by the 1980s that the much celebrated value of individualism was being threatened along with a broader sense of the civic.

The political origins of the 1960s are in the mid-1950s, when Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and when the United States allowed itself to be drawn into Indochina following France's failure there. By the late 1960s, however, the issues of life-style, war, poverty, and race converged, making for a volatile compound that produced riots in cities and divided university campuses. Some academics were radicalized in the process; others retreated to more conservative positions. The middle ground narrowed to the vanishing point. The university is still struggling to accommodate the tensions produced by the continuing coexistence of the rigid categories embraced in the 1950s and the expansive commitments and sensibilities associated with the 1960s.

Perhaps the most important legacy of the 1960s has been a loss of faith in elite institutions, among which universities were included. The failure of the policies advocated by "the best and the brightest" in Vietnam and the "dirty tricks" and casual disregard of law and the Constitution by the Nixon White House produced a legitimization crisis, weakening both political and cultural authority in the United States. Academic experts, once identified with grand hopes, had become a part of the problem, not a part of the solution. It is a chastening story, the course from high optimism about the collaboration of academic expertise and state action reflected in the Full Employment Act of 1946 to the reaction by the Left and the Right against the state and expertise in the 1970s. The demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis in the mid-1970s came to symbolize the failure of a dream.

Liberal and radical academics, who in varying degrees had embraced a politics of participatory democracy in the 1960s, lost confidence in the conventional political process by the end of the 1970s. Many of these academic intellectuals redefined politics in cultural terms; the campus became the world. This move made academic culture and the syllabus, more than the class system and the conditions of community life, the locus of political energy.⁸¹ There was also a celebration, often quite romantic, of the everyday life of ordinary folk and marginal peoples. Elitism became a pervasive worry, and this sensitivity weakened a commitment to the intellectual culture and disciplinary traditions that were (and are) the principal resources of academic intellect.

The Right, by contrast, mobilized against the government, particularly attacking assistance to the poor, to education and scholarship, and to the arts. The political intellectual, historically associated with the Left, came to be identified with the Right and with a program hostile to government support of art and intellect. In the 1980s, conservative intellectual journalists, ensconced in privately-funded positions, initiated extravagant attacks on academics—damning them either as boring and narrow pedants or as unrealistic leftist revolutionaries.⁸²

The ride through and beyond the sixties was sometimes rough. But one can say that along the way intellectual life was opened up and many social and cultural practices were liberalized. It made a difference, as so many commentators have remarked, that students and faculty in universities began to dress alike after the sixties.⁸³ This weakening of traditional hierarchies and authority had wide ramifications, from classroom practices to the definition of research topics. It mattered, too, that students and faculty had been politically mobilized; no one can doubt that the moral and political commitments of the sixties brought issues of race, class, and gender (and new models of society, conflict, and stability) into academic work. The concern with power and exclusion that was so pervasive in the academy of the 1960s stimulated interest in the relation of the Euro-American center to other peoples and to issues of hegemony, colonialism, and domination. The European intellectual tradition that had provided a foundation for higher education (and freedom and democracy) in the Red Book of 1946 came

to be associated by the academic avant-garde with forms of domination.

But if new critical perspectives and a pluralization of disciplinary practices were authorized, there is also a legacy from the sixties of disillusionment. And there has been a continuing conservative backlash.

The ambitious, white, male, Europe-oriented, and quite privileged professional culture of major research universities that had taken its style and intellectual agenda from the 1950s could not sustain itself through the last quarter of the twentieth century. After about 1971, with some variation by discipline, there was a serious and continuing job crisis in academe, especially in the humanities, and this weakened the claims of established hierarchies. The shortage of jobs, along with federal affirmative action regulations and pressure from women and African-American scholars, transformed the process of academic recruitment. Jobs were openly advertised; the “old boy” network lost legitimacy and its former power to place students. Not only did this change promote greater equality of opportunity among job candidates, but it also reduced the advantage of a small cluster of traditionally powerful departments in each discipline.

There was an influx of women into the professoriate, especially in history and literature; they were followed by a substantial increase in African-American scholars and more generally by men and women of distinctly modest and often ethnic backgrounds. The presence of these new social groups in academe changed its culture and promoted attention to issues of race, class, and gender. But more generally, it produced a more varied and thus more complicated academic culture that found it difficult to speak with one voice. As leadership was fragmented (or diversified), so was scholarship.⁸⁴ But this infusion of new talent and the breaking of forms propelled the disciplines, making the era one of remarkable intellectual invention, with new concepts and approaches marking research, especially in history, political theory, anthropology, literature, and art history.

THE CULTURAL TURN

What I have termed a cultural turn encompasses a number of trends—historicism, the linguistic turn, hermeneutics—that are, of course, distinct and even in conflict. Yet the term captures a leading tendency of the intellectual culture of our time, distinguishing it from the broadly analytic emphasis of the immediate postwar years.⁸⁵ The concept of culture, developed by Franz Boas with relativistic and pragmatic implications, spans the century, and by mid-century the idea had been absorbed by many disciplines. Just after the war, a commentator on academic trends in the United States remarked (rightly, as it turned out) that the idea of culture was “one of the most important and emancipating of all twentieth-century contributions to knowledge in the social field.”⁸⁶

It was in the 1960s, however, that our present understanding of the cultural approach began to take shape. A profoundly influential challenge to the positivistic and analytical intellectual strategies of the 1950s came in a brief, elegant book by Thomas S. Kuhn, addressing a fairly esoteric issue in the philosophy of science. That book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), was quickly and eagerly read (and often misinterpreted) by scholars in the humanities and social sciences.⁸⁷ Kuhn offered a historicist interpretation of scientific knowledge that incorporated rich sociological insight identifying communities of inquirers as the authority for knowledge claims. Although Kuhn (unlike some of his readers) believed in a referential theory of knowledge and the progressiveness of science, the implication of his work was a loosening of the connection between object and the interpretation of it. There was little sympathy for Kuhn’s book among analytical philosophers, but it did take some of the glitter off the more extravagant claims of *the* scientific method in the humanities and social sciences. It complicated an earlier generation’s assertion of a natural nesting of science, democracy, and toleration. Kuhn’s work, moreover, provided a platform for Richard Rorty’s more radical critique of the epistemological project of philosophy.⁸⁸

Moving in a complementary direction, Clifford Geertz defined the human experience as interpretive; a human, he wrote in an oft-quoted phrase, is “an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.” Having earlier studied economic development

in Indonesia, Geertz now outlined an approach to social inquiry little concerned with issues of transformation or with the explanation of change over time. Rather, he proposed what he called a “thick description” of cultural moments, most famously a Balinese cockfight.⁸⁹ Both Kuhn and Geertz, as well as Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock, Bernard Bailyn, and others who were deeply involved in this shift toward hermeneutics, emphasized subjective meaning (rather than social causation) as the focus of social inquiry. They understood culture (or language) as constraining, as having deterministic implications, yet, unlike later commentators, they all assumed the possibility of innovation—“revolutions,” in Kuhn’s phrase. And Kuhn even ventured a theory of scientific change.

With Michel Foucault, whose works were first taken up in American academic discourse in the late 1960s and the 1970s, the deterministic implications of this move were vastly expanded; the human subject tended to disappear, trapped in existing “epistemes” and external linguistic structures. Foucault directly challenged the humanist tradition and the progressivist claims of the Enlightenment.⁹⁰

Foucault built his scholarship on structuralism and went beyond it; much the same happened in the human sciences generally.⁹¹ The key American moment came in October 1966, when The Johns Hopkins University hosted a conference funded by the Ford Foundation on “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man.” This intergenerational, international, and interdisciplinary conference, which eventually included one thousand humanists and social scientists in a two-year series of follow-up colloquia and seminars, established a broad interdisciplinary base for the introduction of French theory into the American academy. The pattern of this infiltration of American academic culture was peculiar. Although much of this thought had its origin in French philosophy, it had almost no impact in American philosophy departments.⁹² Nor did it affect economics or political science, save for political theory, a marginal subfield much invigorated by its capacity to absorb theory and contemporary issues. The main impact was in less firmly bounded disciplines—literary study, anthropology, and, to a lesser extent, history.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the impact of French theory coincided with an accelerating increase in the humanistic study of American culture that fostered new fields and new theories. The study of American literature and culture, for example, has moved very near the center of humanistic inquiry in the United States today—something quite unprecedented.⁹³ The domain of American literature has been vastly expanded in the past twenty years, with new interest in non-canonical texts, in writings by African Americans, women, Native Americans, writers of the southwest borderlands, and other previously marginalized or unnoticed literatures.

It was not simply that American academics began to study race or gender or ethnic identity with a new seriousness, but this work, impelled as often as not by a commitment to identity politics and drawing upon both Foucault and Jacques Derrida, deconstructed presumptively natural categories. Race, gender, and “oriental,” for example, were not “natural” or transparent categories but rather historical or cultural constructions that constituted forms of power. Edward Said, Natalie Davis, Evelyn Fox Keller, Joan W. Scott, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Werner Sollors, Carole Pateman, Mary Poovey, Judith Butler, and Anthony Appiah, among others, working in different disciplines and with different methods and perspectives, developed these highly influential critiques.⁹⁴ This work, which is often associated with multiculturalism and cultural studies, is strongly supported by American foundations, particularly the Rockefeller Foundation. It has a considerable international presence, more than American humanistic scholarship has had in the past. When foreign scholars turn to American research, especially in the American field, they are quite likely to follow the literature of race, gender, ethnic identity, and the like.

The work of the American pragmatists became the subject of new interest at home and abroad in the 1980s.⁹⁵ Only a few American philosophers moved in this direction, but they were notable ones such as Richard Rorty and Stanley Cavell. Literary critics, historians, and political theorists reinvigorated the pragmatic tradition, which offered a moderate response to the Nietzschean challenge promoted by Foucauldians and others.⁹⁶

In some ways, the linguistic turn was a rediscovery of the semiotic theories of an American, Charles S. Peirce, the brilliant and eccentric philosopher who a century earlier was among the founders of

American pragmatism. But his was not the pragmatism of John Dewey, for whom truths were tested by experience and by consequential action in public. Although regard for Dewey's program is increasing today, Peirce's approach to the study of signs, texts, or discourses has been dominant. In this mode of scholarship there is very little indication of an inclination or a capacity to bring textual analysis into relation with the examination of institutions, and that is worrisome. As Edward Said has written of contemporary scholarship in the humanities, there is a danger of collapsing the social into the text; in much current practice there is little or no effort to bridge the gap between academic theory and the local politics of everyday life.⁹⁷

Contrary to the author's intention, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* fed an unease about science and about the Enlightenment legacy more generally. Commitments to universalist categories became problematic in the 1980s, largely because the North Atlantic local had too often been presumed to be a global universal. Species-centered discourse was severely weakened; the emphasis was on *ethnos*, on the situated speaker or interpreter. This shift fairly marks the emergence of academic postmodernism, which emphasizes the local, the particular, the fragmentary.⁹⁸ More recently there has been a move—as surprising as it is disturbing—by religious traditionalists to build upon the postmodern critique of the academy's commitment to science and objectivity. For them postmodernism authorizes a challenge to the secularism of the research university. If there is no objectivity in science, they say, then why not give religious perspectives equal credibility with science in the academy?⁹⁹

PROSPECTS

The biggest changes since 1945 fall under the rubric of demographics: there is now a much larger and, more importantly, a far more diverse professoriate. Greater roles have been taken by women and African-American scholars in setting intellectual agendas, both in the domain of race and gender studies and more generally. Academic culture has in a sense been de-Europeanized. Although European ideas, models, and traditions remain predominant, even for those who challenge them, they are no longer transparent.

They are interrogated and contextualized. The most energetic, even aggressive, work in literature, history, anthropology, and cinema studies is now exploring other cultures and the notions of “difference” and “otherness.”

Although the culture wars continue, the theory wars have concluded. There are signs that a reengagement with history is underway, which promises a more dialogic (and fruitful) relation between theory and history in the humanities and social sciences. One sees this development in literature within the broad array of critical practices comprehended, some more historical than others, under the rubric “The New Historicism.” In the social sciences, despite and to some degree in reaction to the imperial quest of rational-choice theorists for a simplified and unified social science, there is a renewed interest in institutional approaches and more complex models in economics and political science. Philosophy is the most resistant to the general drift toward some form of historicism, to the point that Richard Rorty, who has made a strong move in this direction and is perhaps the most widely read American philosopher, is no longer considered a philosopher at all by most graduate professors in the discipline. Philosophy also makes the strongest disciplinary claims for self-referential autonomy, rendering its relation to the larger intellectual public the most problematic. In its practice, if not its content, philosophy seems to have moved the least from the model developed in the 1950s.

At present, the humanities more generally seem to be moving in two directions, both under the sign of a cultural or historical turn. One eschews essentialism and emphasizes the contingent; even the most basic conventional categories of identity are treated as unstable, as cultural or historical constructs—race, gender, sexuality. Opening up such questions—provided it does not ignore the various domains of experience and institutional forms of power—has the promise of both scholarly fruitfulness and civic value.¹⁰⁰

But much current scholarship in the humanities, seemingly guided by the same compass, points in a different direction. A particular deconstructive style rather crudely, and I think unintentionally, restores essentialism: one’s situation, especially circumstances of race or gender, all too readily, even tautologically, determines ideology. All unmaskings have tiresomely similar denouements. Many advocates of this version of cultural studies embrace what

they call a postdisciplinary academy, and they are hostile to the notion of disciplines as they have developed since the Enlightenment.¹⁰¹

Thus one tendency in the broad domain of culture studies fruitfully combines the methods of the humanities with the topical concerns once identified with the social sciences to open new terrain. Another, however, rather discouragingly closes the circle prematurely. As the space of academic inquiry opens up, as more diverse methods and approaches are adopted, one might anticipate a new cosmopolitanism among humanists. Unfortunately, such is not the case; if anything, there has been, as David Damrosch has observed, “an increase of factionality and coterie behavior.”¹⁰²

Looking past such factionalism, one finds a broad divide in academic culture today. One cluster of scholars resides in a variety of humanities disciplines (including history and anthropology). They share weak borders, openly-declared value commitments, and a historical/cultural sensibility, which produces, inevitably, a tendency toward particularism. Another group, identifying mostly with the social sciences—in mainstream economics, political science, law, sociology, and some versions of ethics—is more oriented to tight subfields (often interdisciplinary) and to methods affirmed as objective that attend little to considerations of time and place. The gap between these two interpretive frames, which roughly tracks the borders between the social sciences and the humanities, is more difficult to bridge now than at any time in the past half century.

Taking a longer view, however, one is naturally struck by important continuities, both substantive and structural, especially in the social sciences. Issues of scientism, objectivity, formalism, and the claims of rational-choice theory in the social sciences emerged in the 1920s.¹⁰³ The humanities have changed in much more fundamental ways than the social sciences since that decade, when they were archaeological and philological, dealing not at all with the aesthetic issues that are so much the issue today. Whatever the changes in content, however, it is striking how little the structure of the university has altered since the 1920s, when the present pattern of departments and divisions emerged. The department remains the basic organizational unit. Very few new departments have been created anywhere since World War II, and even fewer

have been abolished. The units of university organization no longer clearly denote the actual intellectual work sustained, yet they manage to provide an effective structure for it.

The relations between the university and the public have surely been better at other times. While some disciplines and subdisciplines have established sub-publics (economics, for example, is oriented to government and business elites, and feminist scholarship is oriented to a wider, interdisciplinary, even interactive, but still particularistic audience), the notion of a general public seems to be attenuated. The dissolution of a public sphere and the limited role of academic intellect in whatever survives of that sphere is worrisome. A democratic culture and polity invites and needs an open dialogue on all questions pertaining to the human condition. Restoring a place for academic knowledge in the public culture and a role for public discussion in academic culture ought to be a high priority of both academic and public leaders. Yet we must not dream of a perfect rapprochement, of a seamless web of discourse uniting the language of daily life with that of the academy.

The university ought never be too comfortable in and with society—and vice versa. To say that the university ought to be connected to society is not to say that it might properly be a synecdoche for the world. But neither should it claim a position of transcendence.¹⁰⁴ There ought to be a degree of friction deriving from the critical spirit that is central to academic intellect. Our thinking about the modern university, as Wendy Steiner has recently observed, is contradictory. We imagine it at once “hermetically sealed from reality and centrally constitutive of it.” But, she insists, “the value of the university, like art, lies in its simultaneous relevance and irrelevance to reality, in a balance that we continually renegotiate.”¹⁰⁵

ENDNOTES

¹See Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 6; Richard Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945–1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Roger L. Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Hugh Davis Graham and Nancy Diamond, *The Rise of the American Research University* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

- ²Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 155; David Damrosch, *We Academics: Changing the Culture of the University* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 51.
- ³Clark Kerr, *The Great Transformation in Higher Education, 1960–1980* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 35–37.
- ⁴Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, 149; Jonathan R. Cole, Elinor G. Barber, and Stephen R. Graubard, eds., *The Research University in a Time of Discontent* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 380–381.
- ⁵On differentiation and the importance of *where* faculty are employed, see Burton R. Clark, “Faculty: Differentiation and Dispersion,” in Arthur Levine, ed., *Higher Learning in America, 1980–2000* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 162–178; on localism, see Freeland, *Academia’s Golden Age*.
- ⁶It should be noted that in the 1940s a large number of distinguished European academics joined American university faculties. Between 1933 and 1943, the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars helped 269 academics find positions in the United States.
- ⁷David L. Featherman, “What Does Society Need from Higher Education,” *Items* 47 (1993): 41. Of course, Great Britain, a considerable center for scholarship, and the substantial English-speaking research establishments in the countries of the former British empire both contribute to this figure.
- ⁸Data on Nobels from Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 155.
- ⁹Abraham Flexner, *Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930).
- ¹⁰Merle Curti, “The Setting and the Problem,” in Merle Curti, ed., *American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 15.
- ¹¹Portions of the Report are conveniently available in Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds., *American Higher Education: A Documentary History*, 2 vols. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1961), II, 970–990; quotation from p. 990.
- ¹²See Richard M. Freeland, “Pragmatism Won’t Save Us But It Can Help,” in Robert Orrill, ed., *The Condition of American Liberal Education* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1995), 158–162.
- ¹³Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, 142.
- ¹⁴Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), 12–13.
- ¹⁵This is a major theme of Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968).
- ¹⁶The ease with which quotas for Jewish students were deployed in the interwar years, particularly at the most elite private universities, is evidence of the weakness of universalist principles in that era.
- ¹⁷Freeland, *Academia’s Golden Age*, 168.

- ¹⁸See René Wellek, "Literary Scholarship," in Curti, ed., *American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century*, 111–145; Louis Wirth, "The Social Sciences," in *Ibid.*, 33–82.
- ¹⁹Harvard University, Committee on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society, *General Education in A Free Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: The University, 1946), 71, 74.
- ²⁰Quoted in Terence Halliday, "Sociology's Fragile Professionalism," in Terence Halliday and Morris Janowitz, eds., *Sociology and Its Publics: The Forms and Fates of Disciplinary Organization* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6. Pages 3–12 contain an interesting comparison of the professionalism of Parsons and the more civic professionalism of Morris Janowitz.
- ²¹On the mobilized state and its contributions to research, see Walter McDougall, *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
- ²²See Robert A. McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
- ²³David Potter, *People of Plenty* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1954); John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1958).
- ²⁴Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge*, 105–106.
- ²⁵Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science* (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1967), 168–169.
- ²⁶See Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 107; Edward Shils, *The Constitution of Society* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1982), chap. 10, esp. p. 259.
- ²⁷See Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963). Religion, according to Hofstadter, was the other major source.
- ²⁸Shils, *The Constitution of Society*, chap. 10.
- ²⁹Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, xiv.
- ³⁰James B. Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945–1968* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1981), 22.
- ³¹Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge*, 41.
- ³²Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age*, 88; Damrosch, *We Academics*, 24.
- ³³See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Daniel Bell, *The Reforming of General Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).
- ³⁴See, for example, Allan Tate, "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," *Hudson Review* 5 (1952): 335–345. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957) is both an artifact of the growing awareness and concern about mass culture in the 1950s and a convenient anthology of both commentary and analysis.

- ³⁵Richard Hofstadter and Walter Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).
- ³⁶Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1949); on Niebuhr, see Richard W. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); for a secularist embrace of Niebuhr's realism, see Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Politics of Hope* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), chap. 9.
- ³⁷Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: J. Cape and H. Smith, 1930).
- ³⁸See Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 158–163.
- ³⁹T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940). His more important book, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), sustains this notion, particularly in an appendix on “The Unity of European Culture.”
- ⁴⁰See David Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 8. For two key essays of the time, see Robert Merton, “A Note on Science and Democracy,” *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* 1 (1942): 115–126; and Sidney Hook, “The New Failure of Nerve,” *Partisan Review* 10 (1943): 2–23.
- ⁴¹Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture*, chap. 2.
- ⁴²William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale* (Chicago, Ill.: Regnery, 1951).
- ⁴³Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern American University* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996). On the vocation of inquiry in the nineteenth century, see David Hollinger, “Inquiry and Uplift: Late Nineteenth Century American Academics and the Moral Efficacy of Scientific Practice,” in Thomas L. Haskell, ed., *The Authority of Experts* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), 142–156.
- ⁴⁴See Edward Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 26; Bender, *Intellect and Public Life*, 103. See also Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).
- ⁴⁵See Henrika Kuklick, “Boundary Maintenance in American Sociology: Limitations to Academic Professionalization,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 16 (1980): 209.
- ⁴⁶See Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990).
- ⁴⁷John Kenneth Galbraith's *American Capitalism* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), which develops the concept in a way that dissolves conflict, confirms my point.
- ⁴⁸See Gilbert, *Another Chance*, 204; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).
- ⁴⁹Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949).

- ⁵⁰Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the Civil War," in Schlesinger, Jr., *The Politics of Hope*, 47; originally published in *Partisan Review* (1949).
- ⁵¹David Easton, "Political Science in the United States: Past and Present," in David Easton and Corrine S. Schelling, eds., *Divided Knowledge: Across Disciplines, Across Cultures* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1991), 44.
- ⁵²See Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking Press, 1950); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 442. Daniel Bell makes this point in his book, *The Social Sciences Since the Second World War* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1982), 51.
- ⁵³See Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Knopf, 1955), esp. chaps. 1–3.
- ⁵⁴For a classic statement of this pluralism, see Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961). For critiques, see Michael Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967); and Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1967).
- ⁵⁵Ellen Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 124.
- ⁵⁶Paul S. Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 160–173, quotations from p. 168.
- ⁵⁷David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950); *Time* (27 September 1954).
- ⁵⁸Byron E. Shafer, "On Being the Same but Different," *TLS* (29 March 1996): 7.
- ⁵⁹Richard Parker in *New York Times Book Review* (28 January 1996): 29.
- ⁶⁰Clifford Geertz may come close, but he makes the point, for it is mainly as a humanist who has assimilated anthropology to literature that his current reputation rests.
- ⁶¹For Robert Merton's classic formulations, see Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949; rev. and enl. ed., 1957). On the appeal of this approach to foundations, see Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 148.
- ⁶²See Talcott Parsons, Robert Bales, and Edward Shils, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953). At the level of high theory, this analysis provided the intellectual foundations for what Shils called "consensual pluralism."
- ⁶³On the role of American studies, see Linda K. Kerber, "Diversity and the Transformation of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 41 (1989): 415–431.
- ⁶⁴See Michael Geyer, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of General Education," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 507–508; David Bromwich, *Politics by Other Means* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 119.
- ⁶⁵Curti, "The Setting and the Problem," 32.

- ⁶⁶Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955).
- ⁶⁷Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949).
- ⁶⁸Quoted in Eric Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 4.
- ⁶⁹On Aspen and the cultural movement it represented, see James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
- ⁷⁰See Frederick F. Siegel, *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), chap. 8.
- ⁷¹Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 3–30; originally published in *Partisan Review* (1961).
- ⁷²Irving Howe, *Selected Writings, 1950–1990* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 240.
- ⁷³See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii–xii.
- ⁷⁴Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 4, 9.
- ⁷⁵Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” in Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1966), 275–292; originally published in *Partisan Review* (1964).
- ⁷⁶Diana Trilling, “The Other Night at Columbia,” in Diana Trilling, *Claremont Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964), 153–173; originally published in *Partisan Review* (1958). See also Lisa Phillips, ed., *Beat Culture and the New America, 1950–1965* (New York and Paris: Whitney Museum of American Art and Flammarion, 1995).
- ⁷⁷Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992).
- ⁷⁸Quoted in Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture*, 4.
- ⁷⁹Sally Barnes, *Greenwich Village, 1963* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 10.
- ⁸⁰Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (New York: Macmillan, 1962); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press and Harvard University Press, 1963).
- ⁸¹See Jonathan Arac, *Critical Genealogies: Historical Situations for Postmodern Literary Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 314–315; Bruce Robbins, *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, and Culture* (London: Verso, 1993); Bruce Robbins, “‘Othering’ the Academy: Professionalism and Multiculturalism,” *Social Research* 58 (1991): 355–372; the exchange between Andrew Ross and Richard Rorty in *Dissent* (Fall 1991): 483–490 and (Spring 1992): 263–267; and the statement by Ross quoted by Stanley Fish in Stanley Fish, *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), 117: the academy “is a massive public

sphere in itself, involving millions of people in this country alone, and so the idea that you break out of the academy into the public is rather a nonsense."

⁸²Of many examples, see Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

⁸³Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge*, 253.

⁸⁴For an account of this development in the discipline of history, see Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73 (1986): 120–136.

⁸⁵Identifying the same cluster of developments, Dorothy Ross uses historicism as an equally useful general identification in "Panel on the Johns Hopkins Seminar of History and Politics," *Studies in American Political Development* 8 (1994): 394.

⁸⁶Curti, "The Setting and the Problems," 5. A key work here was Caroline Ware, ed., *The Cultural Approach to History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940).

⁸⁷Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

⁸⁸See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), esp. chap. 7.

⁸⁹Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5, 6. Almost all the essays in this volume were originally published in the 1960s. For the earlier work, see Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1963); *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Development in Two Indonesian Towns* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1963); and *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965).

⁹⁰His key early works include *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961); *Birth of the Clinic* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963); *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966); and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969). Even more influential were *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975); and *History of Sexuality*, vol. I (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

⁹¹See Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds., *The Structuralist Controversy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

⁹²For an interesting study of the pattern of absorption of French theory in the United States, see Michele Lamont, "How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida," *American Journal of Sociology* 93 (1987): 584–622.

⁹³Julie Thompson Klein, "Knowledge, America, and Liberal Education," in Orvill, ed., *The Condition of American Liberal Education*, 146.

⁹⁴See, for example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975); Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Hannah F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of*

Niccolo Machiavelli (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984); Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and K. Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992).

⁹⁵Jürgen Habermas is the most well-known European student of the American pragmatists, but see also the extremely insightful exploration of American pragmatism as theory by the German Hans Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁹⁶For a fine historical argument locating pragmatism in this context, see James L. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also his recent and important survey of the current place of pragmatism in American academic culture: "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking," *Journal of American History* 83 (1996): 100–138.

⁹⁷Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 147.

⁹⁸On this shift, see David A. Hollinger, "How Wide the Circle of 'We': American Intellectuals and the Problem of Ethnos Since World War II," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 317–337.

⁹⁹See George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For a critique, see Thomas Bender, "Putting Religion in its Place," *Culturefront* 3 (Fall 1994): 77–79.

¹⁰⁰See the somewhat crudely argued but well-targeted warning of Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 726–751, especially his concluding remarks on pp. 750–751.

¹⁰¹The issues here are illustrated in the recent and rather messy contretemps surrounding *Social Text* (Spring/Summer 1996): 46–47; Alan Sokal, "A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies," *Lingua Franca* (May/June 1996): 62–64; and the responses by Andrew Ross, Sokal, and others in *Lingua Franca* (July/August 1996): 54–64.

¹⁰²Damrosch, *We Academics*, 9.

¹⁰³Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Part IV.

¹⁰⁴Here I extrapolate from Michael Walzer's notion of the intellectual as a "connected critic" in Michael Walzer, *The Company of Critics* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

¹⁰⁵Wendy Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 138.

The University without Culture?

Bill Readings

I. Culture

IT IS VERY TEMPTING to see what Gerald Graff has called the “culture wars” as a healthy sign that the debate on United States national culture is once more taking place where it ought to, in the university.¹ Bliss is it in this dawn to be alive, but to be tenured and approaching middle age seems very heaven!² Yet is the United States a “country in romance . . . where reason seems the most to assert her rights,” like Wordsworth’s revolutionary France? To put this another way, are the culture wars better understood as a prelude to a new modernity or as a postscript to the modern? Is this a new age dawning for the university as a project, or does it mark the twilight of its critical and social function? And if it is the twilight, then what does that mean?

After all, one of the most discussed books on postmodernity is Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, a study of the implications of the questions posed to the legitimation of knowledge by postmodernity, a study which is explicitly framed as a report on the university institution, “at this very postmodern moment that finds the university nearing what may be its end.”³ The question of the postmodern is a question posed *to* the university as much as *in* the university. Yet since the postmodern has by and large ceased to function as question and become another alibi in the name of which intellectuals denounce the world for failing to live up to their expectations, I prefer to drop the term for present purposes, in order to avoid confusion. The danger is apparent: it is so easy to slip into speaking of the “postmodern university” as if it were an imaginable institution, a newer, more critical institution, which is to say, *an even more modern* university than the modern university.

At the moment I am more interested in diagnosis than in denunciation, in trying to understand why the debate on national identity in the United States has returned to the university. First of all, though, it is necessary to note that the debate is less specifically American than it might seem. Rather than being the result of any specific betrayal, it in fact draws its energies from an endemic condition of contemporary higher education.⁴ That is to say, the American “culture wars” are one

symptom of the fact that the decline of the nation-state as the primary instance of capitalism's self-reproduction has effectively voided the social mission of the modern university. That mission used to be the production of national subjects under the guise of research into and the inculcation of "culture," a "culture" which has always been thought, since Humboldt, in terms inseparable from national identity. The strong idea of "culture" arises with the nation-state, and we now face its disappearance as the locus of social meaning. Once the notion of national identity loses its relevance, the notion of culture becomes effectively unthinkable: the admission that there is nothing to be said about culture as such is evident in the rise of the quasi discipline of "cultural studies," symptom of that fact that culture no longer has a specific content. It seems to me that this scenario presents a series of options. Either we seek to defend and restore the social mission of the university by simply reaffirming a national cultural identity that has manifestly lost its purchase—the conservative position, or we attempt to reinvent cultural identity so as to adapt it to changing circumstances—the multicultural position.

A third option is to abandon the notion that the social mission of the university is ineluctably linked to the project of realizing a national cultural identity, which is tantamount to ceasing to think the social articulation of research and teaching in terms of a mission. This is a considerably more difficult proposition to accept for both the right and the left, since it means relinquishing our claim to be intellectuals and giving up the claim of service to society as a whole, the claim to both know and incarnate the true nature of society, behind which academics have masked their accumulation of symbolic capital for centuries. A number of factors incline me to think that this third option is the framework within which the future of the university as an institution is sketched out.

To speak of the university and the state is to tell a story about the emergence of the notion of culture. I have argued elsewhere that the university and the state as we know them are essentially *modern* institutions, and that the emergence of the concept of culture should be understood as a particular way of dealing with the tensions between these two institutions of modernity.⁵ This will not simply be a history lesson, for it is prompted in large part by my own attempts to think about a strange contemporary coincidence. The coincidence I have in mind is a simultaneous decline and rise. On the one hand, there is the decline in the power of the university as an institution over the public sphere, with the concomitant elimination of the intellectual as a public figure. The intellectual no longer appears authoritative when speaking either from the university or outside of it—I differ with Russell Jacoby's

moral arguments in *The Last Intellectuals* in that I see this as the elimination of a certain kind of speaking position rather than as a series of failures of subjective will.⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, I shall argue that this is not necessarily bad news.⁷ On the other hand, there is the recent rise of the quasi discipline of “cultural studies” within the university, which promises to install a new paradigm for the humanities that will either unite the traditional disciplines (this is Antony Easthope’s argument) or replace them (this is Cary Nelson’s argument) as the living center of intellectual inquiry, restoring the social mission of the university.⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, I shall argue that this is not necessarily good news. It seems to me that the idea of cultural studies arises at the point when the notion of culture ceases to mean anything vital for the university as a whole. The human sciences can do what they like with culture, can do cultural studies, because culture no longer matters as an Idea for the institution. And along with culture goes the hero of the story, the individual intellectual who is capable of metonymically embodying the process of acculturation through which the subject achieves self-understanding as a cultured subject of culture. To put this another way, it is no longer possible for an individual subject to claim to “embody” the life of the mind—which has major implications for humanities research and teaching.

II. Excellence

What I want to discuss is how we are to reconceive the university once the story of liberal education has lost its organizing center: the idea of culture as the object of the human sciences, both their origin and their telos. The contemporary university is busily transforming itself from an ideological arm of the state into a bureaucratically organized and relatively autonomous consumer-oriented corporation. The sign of this transformation is the way in which appeals to the notion of “excellence” drop from the lips of university administrators at every turn. To understand the contemporary university, we must ask what excellence means (or doesn’t).

It is given to few of us in the humanities to experience the legitimization narrative of empirical positivism, but such has been my lot in writing about the question of excellence. A few months after I first gave a talk on the (in)significance of the concept of excellence, *Maclean’s*, which would doubtless like to think of itself as the Canadian equivalent of *Time* magazine, brought out its third annual special issue on the universities of Canada. The November 15, 1993 issue, which purported to rank all the universities in Canada according to various criteria, was

entitled, to my surprise: "A Measure of Excellence."⁹ Now what this suggests to me is that "excellence" is not simply the equivalent of "total quality management" (henceforth TQMTM). That is, it is not just something imported *into* the university from business in the attempt to run the university *as if* it were a business. Such importations assume, after all, that the university is not really a business, but is only like a business in some respects. "Excellence" implies a quantum leap: the notion of excellence develops *within* the university, as the Idea around which the university centers itself, and through which it becomes comprehensible to the outside world (in this case, the middle and upper class of Canada).

Here is one example of this, in a letter to faculty and staff from a dean (William Sirignano, Dean of Engineering at the University of California at Irvine) complaining about his dismissal by the university president (Laurel Wilkening), as reported in the campus newspaper:

"The Office of the President and the central administration at the UCI campus are too embroiled in crisis management, self-service and controversy to be a great force for *excellence* in academic programs," Sirignano wrote in the Mar. 22 memo. He encouraged the new dean, department chairs and faculty to "create those pressures for *excellence* for the school." The transition in leadership "will be a challenge to the pursuit of *excellence* and upward mobility for the School of Engineering," he said. "It's not going to be easy to recruit an *excellent* dean in this time of fiscal crisis." (my italics)¹⁰

In a situation of extreme stress, and in order to oppose the university president, the dean appeals to the language of excellence with a regularity that is the more remarkable in that it goes unremarked by the staff writer covering the incident. Some sense of the distance we have traveled is apparent in the historical irony of the fact that this is a letter written to criticize the university on March 22, the very date recalled in the naming of the revolutionary movement in French universities in 1968 as "The Movement of March 22." *Sic transit*.

Today, all departments of the university can be urged to strive for "excellence," since the general applicability of the notion is in direct relation to its emptiness. I am grateful to Jonathan Culler for bringing to my attention a good example of how this works. The American university faculty has been defined as a loose association of people united by a common interest in parking, so it is perhaps the more significant that the Cornell University Parking Services recently received an award for "excellence in parking." What this meant was that they had achieved a remarkable level of efficiency in *restricting* motor vehicle access. As he pointed out, "excellence" could just as well have meant making people's lives easier by increasing the number of parking spaces available to

faculty. The issue here is not the merits of either option, but the fact that “excellence” can function equally well as an evaluative criterion on either side: it has no content.

This is clearly what is going on in the case of the *Maclean's* article, where “excellence” is the common currency of ranking. Categories as diverse as the make-up of the student body, class size, finances, library holdings, can all be brought together on a single scale (see fig. 1). Not that this is entered into blindly or cavalierly by the magazine: with a scrupulousness of which the academic community could be proud, *Maclean's* devotes two whole pages to discussing how the rankings are arrived at. Thus, the student body is measured in terms of incoming grades, grade point average during study, the number of “out of province” students, and graduation rates within standard time limits. Class size and quality are measured in terms of student-teacher ratio, and the ratio of tenured faculty or part-timers or TAs. Faculty are evaluated in terms of the number with Ph.D.s, the number of award winners, and the number and quantity of federal grants obtained. The category of “Finances” judges the fiscal health of a university in terms of the proportions of the operating budget available for current expenses, student services, and scholarships. Library holdings are analyzed in terms of volumes per student, and the percentage of the university budget devoted to the library, as well as the percentage of the library budget dedicated to new acquisitions. Finally, “Reputation” combines the number of alumni who give to the university together with the results of a “survey of senior university officials and chief executive officers of major corporations across Canada” (40). The result is a “measure of excellence” arrived at by combining the figures at a ratio of 20 percent for students, 18 percent for class size, 20 percent for faculty, 10 percent for finances, 12 percent for libraries, and 20 percent for reputation.

A number of things are obvious about this exercise, most immediately the arbitrary quality of the weighting of factors and the dubiousness of such quantitative indicators of quality. Along with questioning the relative weight accorded to each of the categories, we can ask a number of fundamental questions about what constitutes “quality” in education. Are grades the only measure of student achievement? Why is efficiency privileged, so that it automatically assumed that graduating “on time” is a good thing—how long does it take to become “educated”? The survey assumes that the best teacher is one who possesses the highest university degree and the most grants, who is the most faithful reproduction of the system, but what says that that makes a good professor? Is the best university necessarily the richest one? What is the relation to knowledge implied by focusing on the library as the place where it is stocked—is

MEDICAL/DOCTORAL UNIVERSITIES		STUDENT BODY				CLASSES				ACULTY		FINANCES			LIBRARY			REPUTATION					
OVERALL RANKING	LAST YEAR	Average Entering Grade	Proportion With 75% or Higher	Who Estimate (Last Year)	Set of Prerequisites (Ordinate)	Median Class Size Last Year	Class Size Last Year	Class Size 1st and 2nd Year	Class Size 3rd and 4th Year	Classes Taught By Tenured Faculty	Faculty With PhD	Awards Per Faculty	Research Grants	Medical School Grants	Operating Budget (\$ Budget)	Scholarship & Transfer (Percentage of Budget)	Student Services (Percentage of Budget)	Buildings Per Student	Expenditures Per Student	Expenditures	Annual Support	Reputation Survey	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
1 McGill	1	2	1	2	1	4	2	1	2	9	2	1	4	3	1	3	7	15	11	14	12	2	3
2 Queen's	3	1	2	3	7	3	1	15	9	2	11	5	3	9	4	12	3	5	2	5	3	7	4
3 Toronto	2	5	6	1	12	10	3	2	8	11	7	4	1	2	3	9	2	3	8	9	1	6	6
4 UBC	4	3	3	12	5	6	6	3	10	14	9	11	6	4	2	2	9	13	5	8	11	12	1
5 McMaster	5	6	4	8	13	12	5	8*	15	15	6	2	12	1	8	6	13	10	4	6	10	2	2
6 Calgary	11	11	12	15	6	7	15	11*	3	3	12	6	9	12	10	8	4	4	3	7	8	5	5
7 Montréal	7	8	7	7	8	14	4	7	4	10	14	12	2	5	5	15	12	12	14	11	13	3	8
8 Dalhousie	6	7	9	9	2	13	8	13	6	1	4	8	11	11	13	11	1	6	12	1	10	5	11
9 Ottawa	8	9*	13	4	3	9	9	4	7	12	1	3	5	7	7	8	8	2	9	10	9	15	13
10 Alberta	9	13	14	6	10	5	11	5	11	12	15	9	8	8	6	4	5	8	1	13	5	13	7
11 Western	10	9*	8	10	11	15	13	14	14	4	8	10	10	10	11	7	10	1	6	6	2	9	12
12 Laval	14	14	11	13	4	1	7	8*	5	6	3	14	7	6	9	1	11	14	15	12	15	11	10
13 Saskatchewan	13	4	5	14	14	2	14	11*	12	8	10	13	15	15	12	13	6	9	4	3	4	14	14
14 Sherbrooke	12	12	10	5	15	8	12	6	1	7	13	15	14	14	14	14	15	11	13	2	14	4	9
15 Manitoba	15	15	15	11	9	11	10	8*	13	5	5	7	13	13	15	10	14	7	7	15	7	1	15

* INDICATES A TIE

* INDICATES A TIE

Figure 1. Table of rankings. Reprinted with permission from *Maclean's*, November 15, 1993, p. 31.

knowledge simply to be reproduced from the warehouse, or is it something to be produced in teaching? Why should senior university officials and the CEOs of major corporations be the best judges of “reputation”? What do they have in common—and isn’t this compatibility worrying? Does not the category of “reputation” raise prejudice to the level of an index of value—and how were individuals chosen?

Most of these are what Lyotard calls “philosophical questions,” however, in that they are systemically incapable of producing cognitive certainty, definitive answers. Such questions will necessarily give rise to further debate—they are, that is, radically at odds with the logic of quantification, with accounting. Criticism of the categories used and the way they are arrived at has indeed been leveled at *Maclean’s*, as it has at the U.S. equivalent survey, and the magazine includes a further three-page article entitled “The Battle for the Facts,” which portrays the heroic struggle of the journalists to find the truth despite the attempts of some universities to hide it. This essay also details the reservations expressed by a number of universities: for example the complaint of the president of Manitoba’s Brandon University that “Many of the individual strengths of universities are not picked up in this ranking by *Maclean’s*” (46). The president here argues only with the particular criteria, not with the logic of excellence and the ranking that it permits. And when the authors of the article remark that “The debate sheds a telling light on the deep unease over accountability,” it does not refer to a critique of the logic of accounting. Far from it: any questioning of such performance indicators is positioned as a resistance to “public accountability,” a refusal to be questioned according to the logic of contemporary capitalism, which requires “clear measures to establish university performance” (48).

Given this situation, to question criteria is necessary, yet a more general point needs to be made concerning the general compliance of universities with the logic of accounting: the fact that they and *Maclean’s* appear to “speak the same language,” as it were: the language of excellence. This survey is going on in Canada, a country where the different universities quite literally speak different languages. And behind the fact that the criteria are heavily biased in favor of anglophone institutions lies the fundamental assumption that there is a single standard, a measure of excellence, in terms of which universities can be judged. And it is excellence that allows the combination on a single scale of such utterly heterogeneous features as finances and the make-up of the student body. A measure of the flexibility of “excellence” is that it allows the inclusion of “reputation” as one category among others in a ranking which is in fact definitive of “reputation.” The metalepsis that allows reputation to be twenty percent of itself is permitted by the intense flexibility of “excellence,” which allows a category mistake to masquerade as scientific objectivity.

Most of all, “excellence” serves as the unit of currency within a closed field: the survey allows the *a priori* exclusion of all referential issues, any questions about what excellence in the university might *be*, what the term might *mean*. What it is, and the survey is quite explicit about this, is a means of relative ranking among the elements of an *entirely closed system*: “For the Universities, meanwhile, the survey affords an opportunity for each to clarify its own vision—and to measure itself against its peers” (40). “Excellence,” that is, is a purely internal unit of value, which effectively brackets all questions of reference or function. Henceforth, the question of the university is only the question of relative value-for-money, the question posed to a student who is situated entirely as a *consumer*, rather than (for example) as someone who wants to think. The image of students browsing through university catalogues, where the world is all before them, where to choose, is a remarkably widespread one which has attracted little comment. I am not, of course, implying that the student should not get the chance to choose, but I think it is worth reflecting on what this image assumes. Most obviously, that of ability to pay. The question of access to tertiary education is bracketed, if tertiary education is perceived as a consumer durable, so that affordability or value for money becomes one category among others influencing an individual choice. Think of magazine consumer reports on which car to buy, and the way in which price is one factor among others, and the effect of the integration of heterogeneous categories of ranking into a single “excellence quotient” becomes apparent.

However much this might scare us, everyone is for excellence. It functions not merely as the standard of external evaluation, but as the unit of value in terms of which the university describes itself to itself, achieves the self-consciousness that is supposed to guarantee intellectual autonomy in modernity. Given that, who could be against it? Under the rubric of excellence, interdisciplinary programs can be created, allowing the application of university-wide standards of straightforward and objective evaluation, so that we will all become more excellent. Is it surprising that corporations resemble universities, healthcare facilities, international organizations, which all resemble corporations?¹¹ Excellence responds very well to the needs of technological capitalism in the production and processing of information, in that it allows for the increasing integration of all activities into a generalized market, while permitting a large degree of flexibility and innovation at the local level. Excellence is thus the integrating principle that allows “diversity” (the other watchword of the university prospectus) to be tolerated without threatening the unity of the system.

The point is not that no one knows what excellence is, but that *everyone* has their own idea of what it is, and once it has been generally

accepted as an organizing principle, there is no need to argue about differing definitions. Everyone is excellent, in their own way, and they will have more of a stake in being left alone to be excellent than in intervening in the administrative process. There is a clear parallel to the condition of the political subject under contemporary capitalism here. Excellence draws only one boundary, the boundary that protects the unrestricted power of the bureaucracy. And if a particular department's kind of excellence fails to conform, then it can be eliminated without apparent risk to the system. This has been, for example, the fate of many classics departments. It is beginning to happen to philosophy. The reasons for the decline of classics are of course complex, but they seem to me to have to do with the fact that they presuppose a subject of culture: the subject that links the Greeks to nineteenth-century Germany, and legitimates the nation-state as the modern, rational reconstruction of the immediate and transparent communicational community of the ancient *polis*. That the ideological role of this subject is no longer pertinent is itself a primary symptom of the decline of culture as the regulatory idea of the nation-state. Hence classical texts will continue to be read, but the assumptions that necessitated a department of classics for this purpose (the need to prove that Pericles and Bismarck were the same kind of men) no longer hold, so there is no longer a need to employ a massive institutional apparatus designed to make ancient Greeks into ideal Etonians *avant la lettre*.¹²

This shift is most evident in the United States, where the university has always had an ambiguous relation to the state. This is because American civil society is structured by the trope of the promise or contract rather than on the basis of ethnicity. Hence where Fichte's university project offers to realize the essence of a *Volk* (people) by revealing its hidden nature in the form of the nation-state, the American university offers to deliver on the promise of a rational civil society—as in the visionary conclusion to T. H. Huxley's address on the inauguration of Johns Hopkins University. It is worth quoting at some length the extended opposition between past and future, between essence and promise, that characterizes Huxley's account of the specificity of American society and the American university, so that he can speak of America as a yet-to-be-fulfilled promise even on the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence:

I constantly hear Americans speak of the charm which our old mother country has for them. . . . But anticipation has no less charm than retrospect, and to an Englishman landing on your shores for the first time, travelling for hundreds of miles through strings of great and well-ordered cities, seeing your enormous actual, and almost infinite potential, wealth in all commodities, and in the

energy and ability which turn wealth to account, there is something sublime in the vista of the future. Do not suppose that I am pandering to what is commonly understood by national pride. . . . Size is not grandeur, and territory does not make a nation. The great issue, about which hangs a true sublimity, and the terror of overhanging fate, is what are you going to do with all of these things? What is to be the end to which these are to be the means? You are making a novel experiment in politics on the greatest scale which the world has yet seen.¹³

Huxley himself, as Rector of Aberdeen, played an important role in the development of the Scottish university in the later nineteenth century, its independence from the Oxbridge model being marked by an openness to the natural sciences and medicine as disciplines and by the fact that it was not controlled by the Anglican Church. These two features make the Scottish university more clearly “modern,” which is to say, closer to the American model. And Huxley’s speech picks out the crucial feature that will define the modernity of Johns Hopkins, founded as an independent medical school: the fact that the United States as a nation has no intrinsic cultural *content*: merely a project of research. That is to say, the American national idea is understood by Huxley as a promise, a scientific experiment.¹⁴ And the role of the American university is not to bring to light the content of its culture, to realize a national meaning, it is rather to deliver on a national *promise*, a contract. This is what makes the canon debate a particularly U.S. phenomenon, since the establishment of cultural content is not the realization of an immanent cultural essence but an act of republican will: the paradoxical contractual *choice* of a tradition. Hence the *form* of the European idea of culture is preserved, but the cultural form has no inherent content. The content of the canon is grounded upon the moment of a social contract rather than the continuity of a historical tradition, and hence is always open to revision.

This is what allows Harvard to offer itself “in the service of the nation” or New York University to call itself a “private university in the public service.” What such service might mean is always up for grabs. The idea of the nation, of the public, is always already an abstraction in America, resting on promise rather than on tradition. This is why “excellence” can most easily gain ground in the United States: since it is more open to the futurity of the promise than is “culture,” and because the question of cultural content was already bracketed in the American university, as Judy points out, in the late nineteenth century. The contemporary advent of “excellence” is thus to be understood as the abandonment of the vestigial appeal to the *form* of culture as the mode of self-realization of a republican people as citizens of a nation-state—the relinquishing of the university’s role as model of even the contractual social bond in

favor of the structure of an autonomous bureaucratic corporation. Along the same lines, one can say that "globalization" is a kind of "Americanization," provided one realizes that this does not mean American national predominance but a global realization of the contentlessness of the American national idea. All will become American, perhaps, but only insofar as the enormous energy expended in attempts to isolate and define an "Americanness" in American Studies programs has been nothing more than an attempt to mask the fundamental anxiety that it in some sense *means nothing* to be American.

However, the United States is by no means alone in this movement. The British turn to "performance indicators" should also be understood as a step on the road toward the discourse of "excellence" that is replacing the appeal to "culture" in the North American university.¹⁵ Indeed, a crisis in the university seems to be a defining feature of the "West," as is evidenced in the Italian students' movement of 1993, or the repeated French attempts at "modernization." Of course, it was the Faure plan for the modernization of the university that produced the events of 1968 in France. However, such attempts at modernization have continued, and the arguments presented recently by Claude Allègre in *L'Age des Savoirs: Pour une Renaissance de l'Université* display a striking consonance with the developments that I have discussed in the United States, Canada, and Britain. Professor Allègre was the special counsellor to Lionel Jospin at the ministry of education from 1988–92, and his book is essentially an exposé of the arguments guiding the reform of the French university, perceived as a locus of stagnation and resistance to change (an argument with which few could disagree). Interestingly, he argues that this drive to reform is "above all a resurgence of the aspirations of '68 . . . but a discreet and calm resurgence."¹⁶ The question of whose aspirations is left undetermined, but it turns out that what 1968 meant, above all, was *openness*. And the twin characteristics of this new opening are, the reader will hardly be surprised to learn, "integration" and "excellence":

We tried to develop [reforms] by opening up a University that was folded in on itself and bringing it closer to the City.

Opening up the University to the City: this is its adaptation to professional needs.

Opening up the University to knowledges: this is the effort to renew research and to recognize excellence.

Integration of the University in its City: this is the University 2000 at the heart of urban planning, it is the policy of partnership with territorial groups.

Integration of the French University in a European ensemble: this is the meaning of European evaluation. (232)

The internal policy of the university is resolved by the appeal to excellence, which serves as the term which regroups and integrates all knowledge-related activities. This in turn permits the wider integration of the university as a corporate bureaucracy among others, both in the direction of the city and of the European community. The city is no longer the "streets," nor even a vision of civic life (the Renaissance city-state that Allègre's title might lead us to expect), it is an agglomerate of professional-bureaucratic capitalist corporations whose needs are primarily centered upon the supply of a managerial-technical class. The city gives the university its commercial form of expression. And the European community supplants the nation-state as the figure of the entity that provides the university with its political form of expression, an expression which is expressly tied to the question of "evaluation." The university will produce "excellence" in knowledges, and as such will link into the circuits of global capital and transnational politics without difficulty. This is because there is no cultural content to the notion of excellence, nothing specifically "French," for example. Thus, the emergence of the University of Excellence in place of the University of Culture can only be understood against the backdrop of the decline of the nation-state.

The vast majority of those who speak about the university adopt one of two positions: either nostalgic calls for a return to the Humboldtian ideals of community and social functioning, or technocratic demands that the university embrace its corporate identity and become more productive, more efficient. A resistance to the technological university that does not ground itself in a pious claim to know the true referent of the university, the one that will redeem it, is difficult to characterize. Mere disdain for appeals to "excellence" will not do: the contemporary geopolitical situation seems to me to disbar any thought of return to the levels of state funding that characterized the Western university during the cold war, when culture (in both the human and the natural sciences) was a field of superpower competition. And the ensuing economic pressures mean that we cannot hope to expand toward a fuller realization of the Humboldtian ideal, even if the narrative of national culture still had a subject that could act as its referent. The challenge of the present conjuncture is a difficult one, but I do not think that what is required of us is the building of a better institution, the production of another model of efficiency, another unified and unifying project. Being smart, in the present situation, requires another kind of thinking altogether, one that does not seek to lend work in the university a unified ideological function. What intervention can be made in the university today, as it abandons its role as the flagship of national culture, but before it embarks irrevocably upon the path of becoming a

bureaucratic corporation? The university has to find a new language in which to make a claim for its role as a locus of higher education—a role which nothing in history says is an inevitably necessary one.

III. Accountability vs. Accounting

It is generally accepted that the three functions that determine the contemporary university are research, teaching, and administration. The last of these is of course the most rapidly expanding field in terms of the allocation of resources, and, as I have argued, its expansion is symptomatic of the breakdown of the German idealist contract between research and teaching. A great deal of the current attack on the university claims that a too-exclusive focus on research is harming teaching. As Gerald Graff has shown in *Professing Literature*, this complaint is as old as the modern university. However, the terms of its contemporary resurgence, are, I have suggested, different, in that the complaint is symptomatic of a more fundamental breakdown: the breakdown of the metanarrative that centers the university around the production of a national subject.¹⁷ The university no longer has a hero for its grand narrative, and a retreat into “professionalization” has been the consequence. Professionalization deals with the loss of this subject-referent of the educational experience by integrating teaching and research as aspects of the general administration of a closed system: teaching is the administration of students by professors, research is the administration of professors by their peers, administration is the name given to the stratum of bureaucrats who administer the whole. In each case, administration involves the processing and evaluation of information according to criteria of excellence that are internal to the system: the value of research depends on what colleagues think of it, the value of teaching depends upon the grades professors give and the evaluations the students make, the value of administration depends upon the ranking of a university among its peers.

In these terms, the oft-repeated claim that the university is too research oriented, has given up on teaching, is in fact the product of a nostalgia for a subject whose “experience” might serve to register and synthesize the university as a whole—a student whose *parcours* could embody and unify higher education. As my earlier remarks on the “life of the mind” may have suggested, I would argue that this student has never in fact existed, and that 1968 proclaimed “his” nonexistence (among other things, by reminding us that the universal student was gendered). In discussing how to transvalue the dereferentialization of the university, how to divert the implacable dereferentializing process of

capitalist bureaucracy into a way to make the university a more interesting place to be, I shall focus on the three levels of teaching, research, and administration. And I should like to be clear, the discourse of “excellence” has its advantages—it is what has permitted the speed with which feminism and African American studies have risen to powerful positions in the disciplinary order. The breakdown of the old disciplinary structure seems to me no great loss as such—it is a matter of in whose interest the changes occur. As a faculty member, I want us to be careful that the surplus-value released by the erasure of old job demarcations gets shared among the faculty and students, and does not simply accrue to the administration. A great deal of costs are saved, for example, by fusing the humanities under the rubric of “cultural studies” (support staff, teaching credits, physical plant, and so forth), and we have to demand that university administrators plow back these savings into funding pedagogical initiatives (such as short-term concentrations for teaching and research, mini humanities centers) that allow interesting work to be done.

I would want to address the question of research under the rubric of community—since what research has always produced is the knowledge that binds a community of scholars together, be it what counts as fact in the “culture of biochemistry” or the fundamental insights that ground the “republic of letters.” Now that we can no longer make a redemptive claim for research, can no longer believe that the imagined community of scholars mirrors in microcosm the potential community of the nation-state, we have to think how to reimagine the notion of community itself. Here I would argue that, far from research giving unity and identity to a community, the process of research should invoke a dissensual community that has relinquished the regulatory ideal of communicational transparency, that has abandoned the notion of identity or unity. Rather than posing the question of research between fragmentary specialization as knowledge and organic synthesis as community, rather than repeating Schiller’s argument from *The Aesthetic Education of Mankind* one more time, I shall attempt to sketch an account of the production and circulation of knowledges that imagines thinking without identity, that refigures the university as a locus of dissensus—a more radical and uncomfortable dissensus even than that proposed by Gerald Graff’s call to “teach the conflicts.” For, behind his laudable desire to displace the monologic authority of disciplinary discourse lies a desire for final consensus, the consensus that would permit the determination and transmission of “the conflict” as an object of professorial discourse.

Second, I want to call for a revaluation of teaching, specifically in relation to the question of time. The time of education is still addressed in general under the terms of a modernist metanarrative that has lost its

purchase: the passage from ignorance to enlightenment in a particular span. Freud pointed out that education, like psychoanalysis and government, is an impossible profession, systemically incapable of closure.¹⁸ And yet the treatment of pedagogic time as exhaustively accountable is a major feature of the push to excellence—"time to completion" is now presented as the universal criterion of quality and efficiency in education. Even though the Mellon report that caused the push for on-time completion of higher degrees in the United States and Canada has been discredited (the massive shortfall in professors occasioned by retirement that it predicted has been more than made up for by "downsizing"), the drive to push out Ph.D.s within four years continues unabated, despite the fact that there are no jobs for them to occupy, either in the university or elsewhere. As I asked rhetorically in discussing the *Maclean's* report: how long does education take? The question becomes the more pressing since the age of the student population is becoming less and less homogeneous, since returning students are becoming an important resource for the university, one whose admission requires that we rethink the temporal structure within which we imagine teaching as a process. We might ponder the fact that the drive to on-time completion of the Ph.D. is accompanied by instructions to faculty (at my university at least) to stop giving "incompletes" to graduate students, to hurry up and tell them that their studies are completed, to stop thinking. Now I am not arguing for some romantic ideal of eternal learning, merely suggesting that the complex time of thought is not accountable, is structurally "incomplete."

It is with regard to the institution that I think we need most urgently to rethink the terms within which we address the function of the university. In particular, the recognition that the university as we know it is a historically specific institution is one with which academics have a hard time coming to terms. History grants no essential or eternal role to the modern research university, and it is necessary to contemplate the horizon of its disappearance. Not to embrace the prospect of its vanishing, but to take seriously the possibility that the university, as presently constituted, holds no lien on the future. As I have suggested, the present model is in its twilight, and I do not think that we can continue to make redemptive claims for the role of the university of "culture," be that culture humanistic, scientific, or sociological. Rather than offering new pious dreams of salvation, a new unifying Idea, a new meaning and a renewed modernity for the university, I will call for an institutional pragmatism, one that recognizes that thought begins where we are, one that does away with alibis. By thinking without alibis, I mean ceasing to justify our practices in the name of an idea from "elsewhere," an idea that will release us from responsibility for our immediate

actions. Neither reason, nor culture, no excellence, no appeal to a transcendence that our actions struggle to realize, in the name of which we can justify our deeds and absolve ourselves. Such a pragmatism, I shall argue, requires that we accept that the modern university is a ruined institution. Those ruins must not be the object of a romantic nostalgia for a lost wholeness but the site of an attempt to transvalue the fact that the university no longer inhabits a continuous history of progress, of the progressive revelation of a unifying Idea. Dwelling in the ruins of the university thus means a serious attention to the present complexity of its space, an endless work of *détournement* of the spaces willed to us by a history whose temporality we no longer inhabit. Like the inhabitants of some Italian city, we cannot seek to rebuild the Renaissance city-state, nor to destroy its remnants and install rationally planned tower-blocks, only to put its angularities and winding passages to new uses, seek to learn from and enjoy the cognitive dissonances that enclosed piazzas and nonsignifying *campanile* induce—and we have to worry about what our relation to tourism is. This pragmatism then involves two recognitions. First, an awareness of the complexity and historically marked status of the spaces in which we are situated, while recognizing that these are spaces that we cannot *inhabit*, from which we are alienated, so that neither nostalgia nor revived organicism are viable options. Second, a refusal to believe that some new rationale will allow us to reduce that complexity, to forget present complexity in the name of future simplicity.

Yet it is incumbent upon me to say something about the question of evaluation. The criterion of “excellence” has been the object of my scorn, but that does not mean that those in the university do not need to bother themselves with such matters, that evaluation is beneath our dignity. Rankings such as that proposed by *Maclean’s* will continue to be published, and the question remains of how the calls for integration and productivity are to be answered. This is also the question of how funds are to be obtained in the face of two terrifying prospects: dwindling public funds and burgeoning interest among transnational corporations in universities as sites for investment. The administrators already have what seems to them an excellent answer to the question of evaluation, so that ignoring it will not make the question go away. The cancellation of the Superconducting SuperCollider project likewise indicates that the United States government is no longer concerned with superpower cultural rivalry for the biggest toys, something which means that the natural sciences are no longer able to write their own research ticket, to presume an infinite investment of the national will in the production of scientific knowledge.

Those in the university are called upon to judge, and the administra-

tion will do it for them by appeals to excellence if they do not respond to the call. Responding does not, however, mean proposing new criteria, but finding ways to keep the question of evaluation open, a matter for dispute—what Lyotard would call the locus of a differend.¹⁹ Let us take the example of student evaluations, which are becoming more and more common in the universities of North America, and which are clearly linked to the repositioning of the student as a consumer of services. In order to permit standardization and integration under a common index of value, administrations push for the introduction of standardized multiple response questions across the board, which will allow the calculation of a quotient of consumer satisfaction, preferably modeled on the consumer survey.

Arguing against the use of such forms does not mean resisting the question of evaluation, merely the refusal to believe that the question of quality in education is susceptible of statistical calculation: a refusal to equate accountability with accounting. It seems to me that an argument can be made for the illegitimacy of such modes of evaluation on two counts. First, concerning the nature of the questions, which make a mistake in logic in presuming that evaluations can be directly deduced from descriptive statements—an illegitimate passage from the descriptive language game to the prescriptive, a confusion between a statement of fact and a statement of value. Hence for example, one of the questions proposed was “Did the professor respect the syllabus?” The statement presumes that such a state of affairs is automatically a good thing (respecting a contract), whereas we are, I think, entitled to suggest that it may be a good thing for a professor to tear up the syllabus and start again, if it seems pitched at the wrong level for the class. Such questions can of course be multiplied. So is the answer then for there to be only one question: “Did you think this was a good course?” Such a question will of course not solve the problem, since it immediately asks us to consider whether student pleasure is the absolute criterion of value—after all, learning may be a painful experience. In sum, I am arguing that no question of value can be asked that will exempt us from having to *read* the answer, and consider it in context; no evaluation does not itself have to be evaluated.

The second order of problem concerning the evaluation of teaching is linked to this: the positioning of the student as sole judge of the quality of education, and the assumption that such a judgment can be quantified—the logic of consumerism. The answer to the question of student evaluation seems to me a model for an approach to the question of evaluation as a whole. First, it is necessary to recognize that what is called for is an *act* of judgment, hence one that is embedded within a discursive or pragmatic context—a context that must be acknowledged

when the judgment delivered is in its turn judged. Second, we must recognize that the question of what is to be done with such evaluations, how they are to be understood, is itself a matter for further judgment. No judgment is final, there is always another link in the chain—questions of value are systemically incapable of closure. Third, the judge at each stage in the process must be called upon to take responsibility for the judgment delivered, rather than hiding behind a statistical pretension to objectivity.

What then, are the practical implications of this questioning of the process of evaluation? First, those in the university have to speak among themselves and to others in terms that acknowledge the complexity of the problem of quality. In fact, the question of value can be complexified without an automatic loss of public comprehensibility—as the relative popularity of figure skating at the winter Olympics, compared with sports in which the winner is established beyond question by a temporal calculation, suggests.

Thus, what is required is a simultaneous recognition both that the question of evaluation is finally unanswerable and that it is essential. That is to say, unanswerability is no excuse for ignoring the question. The late Paul de Man gave us the terms of a literary analysis that recognized the reading of literature as a necessary and impossible task—the same is true of the evaluation of universities. Students would be required to write evaluative essays which can themselves be read and which require further interpretation, instead of ticking boxes and adding up point-scores. The further interpretation and judgment of such evaluations will take time, but it will not take time away from the “real business of the university” (understood as transmitting and producing knowledge). For such evaluation, judgment and self-questioning is the business of the university. This is an instance of what I mean by the transvaluation of dereferentialization—the absence of a referent becomes the holding open of questioning, an exercise of patience. Thus universities should, as it were, be required to write essays in evaluation, not to elaborate mission statements which are all the same from university to university and then quantify how far they have lived up to them. This will mean a lot of work for university presidents, but I for one would rather have them thinking about questions of value than juggling indices of excellence and filling in charts of “goal achievement.” I do not think it is too much to expect that those concerned with evaluation, at every stage of the process, from student to president, be capable of facing up to fundamental questions concerning the nature of value and quality, and nor do I think that the time spent in such reflection will be wasted. “Writing an essay” is of course a metaphor here, a metaphor for producing a judgment of value that seeks to grapple with and take

responsibility for itself as a discursive act. This taking of responsibility thus invokes an accountability that is radically at odds with the determinate logic of accounting, since it argues that taking responsibility for one's actions involves an obligation which exceeds the subject's capacity to calculate, which does not understand responsibility as a matter solely for the subject, a matter that can be calculated by a more self-conscious subject. If we recognize that all judgments are discursive acts, in this sense, we can understand their complexity by means of phrase-analysis. Such writing means an engagement with the variables of the judge's position as emitter of the judgment (asking "Who am I to judge?"), with the question of the recipient of the judgment ("Who is this addressed to, and what difference does that make?"), that of the referent of the judgment ("What am I claiming to judge?"), and that of the meaning of the judgment ("What is the significance of the criteria implied by this judgment?"). And the whole judgment is itself delivered, not as a statement of fact, but as a judgment, to be judged by others in its turn. This will not mean that the judgments are any less effective in the world, merely that they are not final. Hence their effects are themselves up for discussion, and the work of judgment is understood in relation to a continuing discussion rather than a finality (much as we continue to discuss the judgments delivered by figure-skating judges, even after the event).

IV. The Role of the Humanities

Up to this point, my description of the current situation may seem to have rather dire consequences for the university in general and for the humanities in particular. However, this is by no means the case. A certain amount of crystal-ball gazing might lead us to want to say things such as: the humanities will in twenty years time no longer be centered in the study of national literatures, and these predictions might prove more or less correct. However, my argument is less concerned with the precise disciplinary shape that the university of the twenty-first century will assume than with what that shape will *mean*, which is to say, how it will be given meaning as an institutional system. This is why my analysis thus far has tended to ignore the uneven and combined development that is the actual form of appearance of the tendencies that I have sought to isolate, and it is also the reason for my own habit of privileging universities' self-descriptions (such as *prospecti*) over empirical study in the analysis of how universities work. I will cheerfully admit that in all probability far less will change in the daily life of professors and students than one might expect—it will take a lot more than "excellence" to get

some colleagues to change their syllabi. However, significant shifts are taking place in the way in which quotidian practices are organized and ascribed meaning, taking place at a remarkably intense rhythm (I say rhythm rather than speed, since these shifts are not linear but interruptive). I have, for purely heuristic purposes, subsumed these shifts under the name of "dereferentialization"—a decline in the ideological function of the university that is intimately linked to the symptomatic rise of ideology-critique as methodology inside the university.

However, this process of dereferentialization is not an alibi for retirement from the field. Quite the contrary—it seems to me that an engagement with and transvaluation of this shift can allow innovative and creative thinking to occur (which does not imply that this thinking is the instrumental activity of a subject). On this score, however, we have to address two issues: the place of the university in society at large, and the internal shape of the university as an institution. Within modernity, the university held a central place in the formation of subjects for the nation state, along with the production of the ideology that handled the issue of their belonging to that nation-state ("culture"). Its internal organization as a community was meant to reflect that structure of belonging, a community in which a general culture of conversation held together diverse specialities, in a unity that was either organic (Fichte), societal (Newman), or transactional (Habermas).

In this sense, the university held the promise of being a microcosmic model of the organization of the nation-state. What can be done with and in a university that, along with the nation-state, is no longer central to the question of common symbolic life (it is not clear, however, in what terms we can still usefully speak of common symbolic life)? This involves two questions: that of the institution's function as an institution, and that of the community that the institution may harbor. I shall not argue for either a new institution or a new community, but for a rethinking of both terms. If my preference is for a thought of dissensus over that of consensus, it is necessary to realize that dissensus cannot be institutionalized, because the precondition for such institutionalization would be a second-order consensus that dissensus is a good thing, something, indeed, with which Habermas would be in accord. Something like this latter tendency is what makes me dissatisfied with Gerald Graff's powerful arguments in *Teaching the Conflicts*.

For my part, I will propose a certain pragmatism, a pragmatism that does not simply accept the institution's lack of external reference and glory in it (as does Stanley Fish in *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech*), but one that tries to make dereferentialization the occasion for *détournements*.²⁰ Such moves may be critical, but they will not appeal to a transcendent self-knowing subject capable of standing outside his or her

own behavior and critiquing it: they will be transgressions rather than critiques of the institution. Such an institutional pragmatics will be without *alibis*, without “elsewheres,” a truth whose name might be invoked to save us from responsibility for our actions. Here lies another difference with Fish and Rorty: this is a pragmatism which does not believe that it adds up to its own alibi, that its denial of the grand narratives is not itself a project. To put this another way, being a good pragmatist is not in itself a guarantee that one will always be right—it may be pragmatic to abandon pragmatism, so pragmatism cannot function as if it were a project in the modernist sense, as Rorty and Fish seem to hope. Hence institutional practices—even in an institution stripped of platonic illusions—cannot be their own reward. If I have certain principles (more accurately, certain habits or tics of thought), they are not grounded in anything more foundational than my capacity to make them seem interesting to others (which is not the same thing as convincing other people of their “rightness”).

Institutional pragmatism thus means, for me, recognizing that the university today is what it is, an institution that is losing its need to make transcendental claims for its function. The university is no longer simply modern insofar as it no longer needs a grand narrative of culture in order to work. As a bureaucratic institution of excellence, that is, it can incorporate a very high degree of internal chaos without requiring to unify the multiplicity of diverse idioms into an ideological whole. Their unification is no longer a matter of ideology, but of their exchange value within an expanded market. This deprives disruption of any claim to automatic radicalism, just as it renders radical claims for a new unity susceptible to being swallowed up by the empty unity of excellence. Those of us who, like me, have found the university a place where the critical function has in the past been possible, have to face up to the fact that our current gains in critical freedom (unimaginable shifts in the institutional face of new programs, and so forth) are being achieved in direct proportion to the reduction in their general social significance. This is not in itself any reason to abandon projects for change or innovation—far from it—but what is required is that we do not delude ourselves as to their significance, that we do not satisfy ourselves with rebuilding a ghost town. Energies directed exclusively toward university reform risk blinding us to the dimensions of the task that faces us—in both the humanities and the natural sciences—the task of rethinking the categories and modalities of intervention that have governed intellectual life for over two hundred years.²¹

We have to recognize that the university is a ruined institution, while thinking what it means to dwell in those ruins without recourse to romantic nostalgia. The trope of ruins has a long history in intellectual

life. The campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo is decorated by some artificial concrete ruins which allude to Greco-Roman temple architecture, something which might seem incongruous in North America, were it not that it coincides with a history that I have already sketched: that of modernity's encounter with "culture" as the mediating resynthesis of knowledges so as to return to the primordial unity and immediacy of a lost origin (be it the total sunlight and dazzling whiteness of an artificial antiquity or the earthy social unity of the Shakespearean Globe). This story has been with us since at least the Renaissance (which actually took place in the nineteenth century, as the nostalgia of Burckhardt, Pater, and Michelet for an originary moment of cultural reunification)—and I have discussed its incarnations elsewhere.²²

To return to my analogy of the Italian city, this means neither razing the old to build a rational city on a grid, nor believing that we can make the old city live again, return to the lost origin. The question that is raised by the analogy is how we can do something other than offer ourselves up for tourism—the humanities as cultural manicure, the natural sciences as the *frisson* of real knowledge and large toys. If this process seems more advanced in the humanities, this may only be a matter of funding-induced perspective—how much does our vision of what science education does owe to Disney?

The cancellation of the Superconducting SuperCollider suggests that the end of the Cold War does not simply have effects on the readiness of States to fund national competition in the realm of humanistic culture. Indeed, there is an increasing problem with the question of what education in the natural sciences might consist of: to what kind of subject it might be directed. Information technology combines with the drying up of funds to suggest that there may no longer be an open market for graduate students, while vocational engineering schools seem more adapted to the market. Hence, the question of to whom an education in physics or chemistry may be directed has no obvious answer, while American physics departments in particular may have as much reason as the humanities to fear trial by "marginal utility" or "market forces" in funding battles, once there is no longer a quasi inexhaustible defense budget (incidentally, the highest percentage of postgraduate unemployment is not in the humanities, but among physics majors).

All of which suggests that the dualist split between humanities and natural sciences that has been the most apparent structural reality of the university in the twentieth century is no longer the practical certainty it once was. Not that it has been ever so: English was initially perceived in the United States as a practical and business-like alternative to the

classics.²³ Of course, as Graff points out, the study of English literature was soon professionalized under the German model of *Geisteswissenschaft* as an autonomous field of research, in order that its teaching might accede to the dignity of a “science,” a field of knowledge.

I have already dropped dark hints about the fate of departments of philosophy, which seem to be heading down the path of the classics, once the sumptuary laws that made a university without a strong philosophy department unthinkable have been dropped in favor of market imperatives. This may not be a bad thing, since this does not necessarily mean that a set of questions about the nature and limits of thinking, about the good life, and so on, that were once asked under the heading of philosophy have ceased to be asked. It simply means that nothing in contemporary society makes it evident that individuals should be trained to ask such questions. Instead, philosophy departments are spinning off into applied fields in which experts provide *answers* rather than refining questions—medical ethics being the most obvious example, not least because the boom in medical ethics is the product of the interaction between biomedical technology and the economics of the American medical insurance “system.”

Responsibility for questioning seems to have devolved onto literature departments insofar as those departments are themselves increasingly abandoning the research project of national literature—so that “English and Comparative Literature” tends to function in the United States as a catch-all term for a general “humanities” department (and is likely for that reason to be gradually replaced by the less weighted title, “Cultural Studies”). It is worth thinking about why “Cultural Studies” should win out over the traditional designations of “History of Ideas” or “Intellectual History.” This has to do both with their relationship with the existing research project of the history department and also with the extent to which the term “studies” acknowledges the fact that the professionalization of the academy today is no longer structured by research into a central “idea.” To put this another way, the idea of culture in Cultural Studies is not really an “idea” in the strong sense proposed by the modern university. *Cultural Studies, that is, does not propose culture as a regulatory ideal for research and teaching so much as recognize the inability of culture to function as such an “idea” any longer.*

I am frankly not equipped to trace the parallel processes that may emerge in the natural sciences, but the apparent horizon in arts and letters for the North American university can be roughly sketched as the development of an increasingly interdisciplinary general humanities department amid a cluster of vocational schools, vocational schools which will themselves include devolved areas of expertise traditionally centered in the humanities, such as media and communications. This is

of course a historical irony, since it has striking similarities to the original plan of many land-grant universities, before most of them bought into the research university model as the way to acquire increased prestige and concomitant funding. Such a horizon of expectation is already being marketed to us under the slogan of the "Liberal Arts College within the University of Excellence." Needless to say, the liberal arts college is invoked here less in terms of its pedagogical tradition than in terms of its potential attraction to consumers.

Such is the "role" that the humanities are called upon to play in the University of Excellence, one that wavers between consumer service (the sense of individual attention for paying students) and cultural manicure. And the claims for scientific research in the humanities, for a *Geisteswissenschaft*, that have, through the history of the modern university, assured a dignity to the humanities, no longer find themselves reflected in and guaranteed by a guiding idea of culture for the university as a whole. Hence it is not the research model, I fear, that will save the humanities (or indeed the natural sciences), since the organization of the humanities as a field structured by a project of research no longer appears self-evident (with the decline of the nation-state as the instance that served as origin and telos for such organization). In a general economy of excellence, the practice of research is of value only as an exchange value within the market, it no longer has intrinsic use-value for the nation-state.

The question remains of how the call of thought may be addressed within the university. We should be clear about one thing: nothing in the nature of the institution will enshrine thought or protect it from economic imperatives—and such a protection would in fact be highly undesirable and damaging to thought. But at the same time, thinking, if it is to remain open to the possibility of thought, to take itself as a question, must not seek to be economic—it belongs rather to an economy of waste than to a restricted economy of calculation.²⁴ Thought is nonproductive labor, and hence does not show up as such on balance sheets except as waste. The question posed to the university is thus not how to turn the institution into a haven for thought, but how to think in an institution whose development tends to make thought more and more difficult, less and less necessary. If we are not to make this into an analogy for the waning power of the priesthood—faced by unbelief on the one hand and television evangelism on the other—this requires us to be very clear about our relation to the institution, to give up being priests altogether. In other words, the ruins of the university must not be, for students and professors, the ruins of a Greco-Roman temple within which we practice our rites as if oblivious of their role in

animating tourist activities and lining the pockets of the unscrupulous administrators of the site.

Here I want to return to what I said about the problem of evaluation. The challenge that faces those who wish to preserve the task of thinking as a question is a difficult one, which does not admit of easy answers. It is not a question of coming to terms with the market, establishing a ratio of marginal utility that will provide a sanctuary—such a policy will only produce the persistent shrinking of that sanctuary, as in the case of old-growth timber in the United States. How many philosophers, or redwoods, are required for purposes of museification? If both the grand project of research and the minimal argument of species preservation are likely to prove unsuccessful, it seems to me necessary that our argument for certain practices of thought and pedagogy must measure up to the situation and accept that the existing disciplinary model of the humanities is on the road to extinction. Within this context, a certain opportunism seems prescribed—to dwell in the ruins of the university is to try to do what we can, while leaving space for what we cannot envisage to emerge. For example, the argument has to be made to administrators that resources liberated by the opening up of a general interdisciplinary space, be it under the rubric of the humanities or of cultural studies, should be channeled into supporting short-term collaborative projects of both teaching and research (to speak in familiar terms) which would be disbanded after a certain period, whatever their success.²⁵ Within this context, it would be first necessary to make some very firm deal about hiring prospects on the basis of an overall ratio of tenured faculty to students rather than, as now, on the rather specious basis of “disciplinary coverage” (it is remarkable how few departments of English, for example, actually turned out to “need” as many medievalists as they once did).²⁶ I have a certain diffidence about such plans as this, which always smack of bad utopianism, since there is no general model, merely a series of specific local circumstances—I supply these suggestions merely in the interest of attempting to find possibilities in the current (and, I think, implacable) bourgeois economic revolution in the university that work in the service of thought. It is essential to understand that this is not a move of “big politics,” not an attempt to divert the process toward another result, a different end. Rather, it seems to me, recognizing the university as ruined means abandoning such teleologies and attempting to make things happen within a system without claiming that such events are the true, real meaning of the system. The system as a whole will probably remain inimical to thought, but on the other hand the process of dereferentialization is one that liberates new spaces and breaks down existing structures of defense against thought even as it seeks to submit

thought to the exclusive rule of exchange value (like all bourgeois revolutions). Exploiting such possibilities is not a messianic task, but since such efforts are not structured by a redemptive metanarrative, they require of us the utmost vigilance, flexibility, and wit.

Given the prospect of such a generalized disciplinary regroupment, it seems to me necessary that we engage in a consideration of how the university might function as a place where a community of thinkers dwells, with the proviso that we rethink critically the notion of community, so as to detach it from both the organicist tradition and the feudal corporation. On this basis, it may become possible to transvalue the process of dereferentialization. The terms for such an archipelago of minor activities remain to be found or made up. If we do not try to pose the question of how to think in the humanities without reference to the idea of culture, then the bureaucracy will answer it for us, will provide what already seems to them an excellent answer.

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NOTES

1 Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York, 1992).

2 Since the right wing assures us that we are all utterly devoid of culture, and since I can never remember quotations myself, I had best point the reader to Wordsworth's *Prelude*, book XI, ll. 693–94 or 118–19, depending on your edition.

3 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1984), p. xxv.

4 As Michael Peters remarks: "To say that the university in Western society is in a state of crisis is simply to echo the thoughts and sentiments of a generation of post-war commentators. The word 'crisis,' accordingly, has lost almost any conceptual purchase" (see "Performance and Accountability in 'Post-Industrial Society': The Crisis of British Universities," *Studies in Higher Education*, 17 [1992], 123–40).

5 See my essay, "For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics: The University, Culture, and the State," *The Oxford Literary Review*, 15 (1993), 163–200, to which the present essay is something of a companion piece. Both are closely related to my current book project, provisionally entitled *Beyond Culture*.

6 See Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York, 1987). As Bruce Robbins points out, Jacoby's image of a "gloriously independent" intellectual role is a fiction (Bruce Robbins, Introduction, *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics* [Minneapolis, 1990], p. xv). However, I do not share Robbins's belief that a materialist analysis of culture will save the universal role of the intellectual by giving him or her a new narrative—as will, I think, become clear.

7 On the decline of the figure of the intellectual, see Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings* (Minneapolis, 1993). Two further fine explorations of this topic appear in the electronic journal *Surfaces*, 2 (1992): Bruce Robbins, "Mission Impossible: L'intellectuel sans la culture" and Paul Bové, "The Intellectual as a Contemporary Cultural Phenomenon" (available by FTP transfer from harfang@umontreal.ca).

8 See Antony Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies* (London, 1991) and Cary Nelson, "Always Already Cultural Studies: Two Conferences and a Manifesto," *Journal of the Midwestern Modern Language Association*, 24 (Spring 1991).

9 Maclean's, 106, no. 46 (Toronto, 15 Nov. 1993); hereafter cited in text.

10 Phat X. Chem, "Dean of Engineering Forced Out," *New University*, 27 (4 April 1994).

11 Foucault's chapter on "Panopticism" ends with the following ringing rhetorical questions: "The practice of placing individuals under 'observation' is a natural extension of a justice imbued with disciplinary methods and examination procedures. Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penalty? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, tr. Alan Sheridan [New York, 1979], pp. 227–28).

The notion of excellence, functioning less to permit visual observation than to permit exhaustive accounting, works to tie the university into a similar net of bureaucratic institutions.

12 Hence ancient texts can now be read in considerably stranger ways, ways that recognize historical discontinuity without immediately recuperating it in terms of a Fall narrative as "the glory we have lost." One of the more striking examples of this is the contemporary recognition by thinkers such as Lyotard, that Aristotle's notion of the "golden mean" and of *phronesis* have nothing to do with the assumptions of democratic centrism—producing a much more politically radical account of Aristotle's call for prudent judgment on a case-by-case basis. The point that Aristotle makes in the Nichomachean ethics is that the mean is refractory with regard to the individual and that no rule of calculation will allow the judge to arrive at it, since what constitutes prudent behavior radically differs from case to case. I have discussed the political implications of the "revolutionary prudence" in "PseudoEthica Epidemica: How Pagans Talk to the Gods," *Philosophy Today* (1992), 377–88.

13 "1876 Address on University Education (delivered at the opening of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore)," in T. H. Huxley, *Science and Education*, in *Collected Essays*, III (London, 1902), pp. 259–60.

14 Ronald Judy, in the short history of the American university with which he prefaces *(Dis)Forming the American Canon: African-Arab Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (Minneapolis, 1993), also situates the foundation of Johns Hopkins as a crucial turning point which defines the specificity of the American university. As Judy remarks: "These movements towards academic professionalization and instrumental knowledge reached their culmination with the incorporation of Johns Hopkins University in 1870, or, more precisely, with the appointment of Daniel Coit Gilman as its president in 1876. Gilman made Johns Hopkins a model research institution where the human and physical sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) flourished as disciplined methodologies" (p. 15). Judy's account differs slightly from mine in that he associates the founding of Johns Hopkins with the very bureaucratic ideology of methodological specificity that undermines the possibility of general culture—a bureaucracy which I locate as the distinguishing trait of the university of excellence. Hence he argues that the disciplinary specificity of the humanities curriculum arises in the late nineteenth century, "at precisely that moment when the humanities were no longer required to respond to the demand for relevance," pointing to David S. Jordan's institution of the first English degree at Indiana University in 1885 (p. 16). Judy calls this "the professionalization of the human sciences" and links it to the development of an overarching "culture of bureaucracy" that unites the human and the natural sciences under a general rubric of professionalization (p. 17). He is thus telling a

story quite comparable to my own concerning the replacement of the general idea of culture by a generalized bureaucracy, except that he locates it in the latter half of the nineteenth century rather than in the latter part of the twentieth. Our disagreement is, I think, less historical than cartographical. I am concerned to introduce a transitional step into the passage from the modern German university of national culture (within which "culture" was the object of professionalized research projects) to the bureaucratic university of excellence, one which positions the United States university as the university of a national culture that is contentless. Hence I think there is a distinction to be drawn between the referential professionalism of the University of Culture and the de-referentialized bureaucracy of the University of Excellence.

15 An account of the debate over "performance indicators" is provided in Peters, "Performance and Accountability in 'Post-Industrial Society.'"

16 Claude Allègre, *L'Âge des Savoirs: Pour une Renaissance de l'université* (Paris, 1993), p. 232; hereafter cited in text. Translations are my own.

17 On the topic of professionalization, see Samuel Weber's fine reading of Bledstein in *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis, 1989). His analysis is somewhat more convincing than John Guillory's rather anachronistic attempt to see literary theory as "professionalization" of literary studies. Guillory underestimates the marketing skills of the New Critics (John Guillory, *Cultural Capital* [Chicago, 1993]).

18 Sigmund Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and tr. James Strachey (London, 1953-74), XXIII, pp. 216-53.

19 On the differend, see my *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London, 1991).

20 Stanley Fish, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech* (New York, 1994). For an important argument for another kind of pragmatism than Fish or Rorty's, see Samuel Weber's *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis, 1987), from which I borrow much.

21 One simple example: for a consideration of the way in which the Internet threatens to delegitimize the structure of scholarly publishing, see my "Caught in the Net: Notes from the Electronic Underground," *Surfaces*, 4 (1994), available via gopher from the Université de Montreal gopher site (anonymous FTP server).

22 See my "When did the Renaissance Begin?" in *Rethinking the Henrician Era*, ed. Peter Herman (Chicago, 1993) for a more developed account of the invention of the Renaissance and the question of the visibility of history.

23 See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 19-36.

24 See Georges Bataille, "La notion de dépense," in *La part maudite* (Paris, 1967) for the origins of this distinction.

25 I say "whatever their success" because of my belief that such collaborations have a certain half-life, after which they sink back into becoming quasi departments with budgets to protect and little empires to build. That is to say, they become modes of unthinking participation in institutional-bureaucratic life.

26 My remarks about coverage are no slur to medievalists in particular: I think that the twilight of modernity makes the premodern a crucial site for understanding what a non-Enlightenment structure of thought might look like. My point is rather that the relative weakness of arguments for disciplinary coverage proceeds from the fact that such arguments presume the university to be primarily an ideological institution, when in fact this is not the case. I will go further, and say that my suggestion is a crucial means for preserving classical and medieval texts from the extinction that currently threatens them. I do not have space here to get into an argument about tenure, so I merely presume its transitions continue. However, I think that the increasing proletarianization of the professoriat suggests that tenure may not *necessarily* (I italicize, to remind readers that I only wish to consider a possibility) be the most effective defense of faculty interests in the future. Note that the notion of faculty-student ratio is an economic rationale that I believe can be sold to administrators with potentially interesting results.

The Counterrevolution on Campus

Why Was Black Studies So Controversial?

The incorporation of Black studies in American higher education was a major goal of the Black student movement, but as we have seen from San Francisco State College, City College of New York, Northwestern University, and many other campuses, the promise to implement it was typically followed by another period of struggle. Whether it was because of hostility, clashing visions, budget cuts, indifference, or other challenges, the effort to institutionalize Black studies was long and difficult. To the extent that there was a “black revolution on campus,” it was followed, in many instances, by a “counterrevolution,” a determined effort to contain the more ambitious desires of students and intellectuals. This chapter explores critical challenges and points of contention during the early Black studies movement, with a particular focus on events at Harvard University. The struggle at Harvard concerned issues common to virtually every effort to institutionalize Black studies, although not all were as contentious or politicized as in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the early 1970s. As St. Clair Drake dryly noted, “The 1968–73 period was a unique one in American academia.”¹

This chapter also examines the controversy and conflicts surrounding the meaning and mission of Black studies. Black studies was controversial among many, both inside and outside academe, for its intellectual ideas, shaped as they were by the swirling ideological currents of Black nationalism. Black studies was seen by many as an academically suspect, antiwhite, emotional intrusion into a landscape of rigor and

reason. But rather than a movement of narrow nationalism and anti-intellectualism, as some critics charged, the early Black studies movement advanced ideas that have had significant influence in American and African American intellectual life. It emphasized interdisciplinary study, questioned notions of objectivity, destabilized metanarratives, and interrogated prevailing methodologies. Indeed, the capacious vision of most architects of Black studies is striking: they viewed it as an opportunity to create Black-controlled institutions and to assume greater authority over research in Black culture and history. At the same time, they saw African American studies as a means to transform American intellectual life more generally and, ultimately, some hoped, the status of Black people in society as a whole. While the early Black studies movement broke new ground, it was not, by any means, of one voice: there were spirited debates about the direction ahead and, indeed, the very definition and mission of the new discipline.

Because Black studies arrived like an explosion on the American scene, and because students brought it into being and then graduated, Black scholars had to move quickly to give it definition and shape. Many stressed the innovation and legitimacy of a “Black perspective” as a unifying principle—almost a methodology—for this new multidisciplinary academic formation. A “Black perspective” not only answered critics who questioned the rationale for Black studies, but it also aimed to unmask the pretense of universalism in Euro-American intellectual thought and teaching. It is vital to underscore the overwhelmingly Eurocentric nature of the American college curricula and the extent to which white scholars argued that their theories and research had “universal” application. The Black studies movement forcefully pushed back against this claim and began a process that would open up space for other marginalized experiences, perspectives, and identities to find their own space in higher education.

Some critics of a “Black perspective” tended to see it as little more than racial essentialism. “There is no white truth or black truth or Aryan physics or Bolshevik biology,” retorted white scholar Sidney Hook. For other skeptics, the notion of a Black perspective connoted a didactic mission aimed at molding Black minds into one view or a monolithic conception, which risked disguising the ideological heterogeneity among Black people. This was the objection voiced by historian Eugene Genovese. “There is no such thing as a black ideology or a black point of view,” he declared. “Rather there are various black nationalist biases,” and conservative and integrationist views too.²

Proponents of a Black perspective, however, anticipated these criticisms. Black intellectual production, from the nineteenth century through its professionalization in historically Black colleges, has been part of a cosmopolitan, humanist tradition,³ but African American political and intellectual thought of the late 1960s and early 1970s is often flattened, caricatured and squeezed into a narrowly nationalist box. Indeed, there is much that belongs in that box, especially the pervasive patriarchy and homophobia. Yet the various articulations of a “Black perspective” that arose in these years of radical political struggle and upheaval were transnational, critical, and expansive. The foundational moment of modern Black studies bears out historian Manning Marable’s assertion that “pluralism and diversity” are “at the heart of the Black intellectual tradition.”⁴ And this is true in spite of powerful countervailing pressures coming not only from political ferment but also from many people’s perception of what a new academic enterprise entailed—the widespread sense that discipline-building required an authoritative move, that it demanded a unified theory of Black reality to justify the creation of Black studies.

The early Black studies movement produced a rich and voluminous outpouring of writings seeking to define its mission—many first appeared in the *Black Scholar*, the *Journal of Negro Education*, or the *Journal of Black Studies*. A sampling of these has since been anthologized, but many were also presented at the multitude of conferences, workshops, and gatherings and remain unpublished. At a California workshop, Lawrence Crouchett’s presentation, “The ‘Black Perspective’: From A Black’s Perspective” underscored the idea that an assertion of commonality did not preclude difference and individuality. A “‘black perspective’ simply means a way of perceiving an object, a situation, an issue or a problem as a black person—because of his unique experiences in the United States—would perceive it,” he argued. This notion of “positionality” would in fact powerfully influence ethnic studies in the ensuing decades. Hardly rigid and essentialist, a Black perspective was in this view necessarily improvisational and creative: “These unique experiences cause black people to weigh things differently from the way others do. You must understand that black people are involved in a struggle to cause ‘mainstream America’ to relate to us as equal human beings. Therefore, black people must be defensive, sensitive, militant, suspicious, cautious, and committed to democracy. All this is part of our ‘survival kit.’ Conventional education has ignored the

‘black perspective’; it was too anxious and committed to justifying the ‘white perspective.’”⁵

According to its proponents, Black studies exposed not only the racial bias in Euro-American scholarship but also destabilized notions of scholarly objectivity, detachment, and universality that were the hallmarks of professional academic culture in the United States. Historian Vincent Harding wrote, “No longer is the black view accepted as one which is narrow compared to the white—or the universal—but it is considered a view far richer and humane, pressing us beyond the constructions of the white, conquering, west, moving us out into the true universe. . . . Blackness is perhaps a door to a far larger view of the world than white America has ever known.” Black students, in Harding’s view, were “no longer fooled by the special claims of the great universities to be the sources of wisdom, objectivity and truth.”⁶ In an essay exploring the distinction between *Black Studies* and *the Study of Black People*, Cedric Clark defined the former as “the research, practice, and teaching of a social science whose repertoire of concepts include as fundamental and essential those derived directly from the Black American cultural experience.” He emphasized that Black studies challenged the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences. It “raises fundamental questions with regard to the ‘objectivity’ of social knowledge,” and “despite efforts by [Peter] Berger, [Robert] Merton, and others, the relevance of epistemology . . . remains a relatively undeveloped area of American social science.” Now, with the rise of Black studies, a social scientist’s “unquestioned assumptions” will be “held up to a closer, more critical scrutiny than ever before.”⁷

The Trinidadian scholar Basil Matthews, a professor at Talladega College, saw a Black perspective as part of the search for a new humanity. “Western social theory is assumed to be universal. But its applicability to black people and black experience is open to serious question,” he asserted. He clarified, however, that the task of Black studies was not simply corrective. “It might appear,” he wrote, “that the primary purpose of the new discipline is to correct and remedy the shortcomings of Western science. But such a view would reflect less than half the truth. The approach corrects and remedies precisely because it is different and regenerative in approach. The new approach is essentially a promise and an effort to positively and creatively advance the knowledge of the specifics of the black experience.” The answer to white studies is not a narrow reaction “but black wisdom within the wider context of total humanity.”⁸

Many scholars emphasized academe's omission of the experience of Black people and the transformative potential it thus carried. "The black perspective," wrote one scholar, "is desperately needed because American intellectualism has failed to deal adequately with the realities of the black presence in America." As education activist Preston Wilcox put it, "The old perspectives have assigned inhuman status to Blacks." The demand for a Black perspective represents a "broad condemnation of the integrity, adequacy and honesty of the US educational establishment." Common to this discourse was the idea that the affirmation of a racial particularity served as a springboard to a broader intellectual insurgency, or humanism. In a speech later published in book form as the *Challenge of Blackness*, Lerone Bennett defined *Blackness* as the search for universal truth. "We cannot think now because we have no intellectual instruments," he argued, "save those which were designed expressly to keep us from seeing. It is necessary for us to develop a new frame of reference, which transcends the limits of white concepts. We must abandon the partial frame of reference of our oppressors and create new concepts which will release our reality, which is also the reality of the overwhelming majority of men and women on this globe."⁹

For many, the idea of a Black perspective meant reclaiming scholarly debates about Black people from scholars who appeared disparaging and dismissive of Black life. There are white sociologists, Harvard's Ewart Guinier observed, "who examine the black experience with a concept that black people are a problem, that black culture does not exist or if it exists is a distorted and inferior imitation of American culture." In contrast, a Black point of view "says Black culture has been a viable means of survival for Black people. Black culture expresses the Black experience," and is neither "inferior nor superior to another culture."¹⁰ Historian Vincent Harding saw the need to claim control as an assertion of Black people's dignity: "Black history is refusal to give over our lives, our creativity, our history, our future into the hands of white America, for they proved themselves totally inadequate and ultimately dangerous. So we demand hegemony over our institutions. We seek control of the telling of our story."¹¹ This "we" may appear monolithic, but many and divergent Black perspectives on the telling of the history of the African diaspora asserted themselves in these years.

Many theorists of a Black perspective were careful to articulate an expansive and critical vision. After visiting more than a hundred campuses in 1969, one scholar defined Black studies as "an attempt to create a humane and viable intellectual and ideological alternative to

Western cultural imperialism. By widening the narrow perspective of 'white studies,' black studies will force American intellectualism toward, not away from, attainment of the intellectual idea of encompassing the totality of human perspectives and experiences." In fact, Black studies would enable the academy to actually begin to do the comprehensive universal work that it had long claimed to do. This same scholar wrote, "Black studies is an attempt to return American intellectualism to its proper mission, namely, to conserve, to examine, to expand, and to communicate the scope of human experience as it exists and has existed." Moreover, acceptance of a Black perspective would legitimize other marginalized perspectives. This researcher wrote, "If interpreting reality from the Black perspective is a legitimate extension of intellectual endeavors, then so too must other long ignored perspectives be capable of shedding new light on the human experience. . . . For example, American intellectualism has a masculine bias which is as entrenched as its bias against non-Western people. At this moment we know far too little about the feminine perspective to be able to assess its potential impact. The best guess is that it will have a profound balancing effect on what has been an almost exclusively male-oriented vision of human reality." Imagine, too, "how the Native American perspective would alter the dominant view of the American West."¹²

Proponents of Black studies did not conceptualize it as an insular area of inquiry only of interest to black people, but as the opening salvo in major changes in the American academy. Armstead Robinson called Black studies "the cutting edge of a revolution in American education." "American intellectualism is on the verge of a new age," another scholar declared, "and Black studies is the forerunner of that new age." And doubtless in all seriousness, the sociologist Andrew Billingsley, who helped set up Black studies at Berkeley, called it "an instrument for the redemption of western society as we know it." In his view, "Black studies provides us with an opportunity to dream of things that never were and to ask why not. Black people have never controlled anything on these shores," he noted, and the new discipline offers a unique opportunity for African Americans to build something new.¹³

The young historian Armstead Robinson, who had organized an important symposium on Black studies at Yale University in 1968 as a graduate student, and who then went on to help develop several Black studies programs, conducted a survey of the field in 1969. In his view, Black studies provoked a crisis because it was exposing the fact that the education system in the United States upheld Western cultural imperial-

ism. Black studies revealed that the rest of the curriculum constituted “white studies.” With its mask of objectivity pulled off, what would “white studies” do now? “Black studies cannot be understood outside the context of a black revolution,” he argued, because it “should involve you from the cradle to the grave. We have to create a totality of learning experiences for Black people which will make blackness automatic and avoid for the next generation of black children the kind of agonizing appraisals, anxieties and doubts that upset black people today.”¹⁴

A dominant theme among Black studies proponents was its transformative potential and ability to illuminate larger truths about the United States. “Black history can give the American society unparalleled insights into the deficiencies of its own value system as carried out in practice,” two white historians wrote. “Americans have, in a sense, built a nation upon the deception that they are a community of co-equal individuals participating co-equally in community affairs. Solid studies in Black history will put that illusion into perspective.”¹⁵ Darwin Turner echoed this view that Black studies could generate a more faithful alternative to the core myths of American life. “Reality and the official ideology of Americanism could not and cannot be reconciled,” he argued, seeing in Black studies the potential to develop a new, more honest national narrative.¹⁶ The historian Benjamin Quarles was of a generation of Black academicians who were more skeptical of the new idiom, but he still found much to approve. “The newer black history has a revolutionary potential,” Quarles declared. “For blacks it is a new way to see themselves. For whites it furnishes a new version of American history, one that especially challenges our national sense of smugness and self-righteousness and our avowal of fair play. Beyond this the newer black history summons the entire historical guild—writers, teachers and learners—to higher levels of expectation and performance.”¹⁷

In many respects, these idealistic visions for the new discipline of African American studies seem at a far remove from the rough-and-tumble political battles that propelled its birth. Black student activism may have won Black studies, but to many white academic elites, Black studies remained an oxymoron. Could a Black perspective produce valuable knowledge? Was there a Black intellectual tradition? Was there sufficient scholarship and imagination to justify a department of African American studies? For many white American intellectuals, the answer to all these questions was an unblinking no. Establishing the discipline in such an intellectual and political environment was a profound chal-

lenge, even with the many opportunities and concessions won in the late 1960s.

As at many other schools, the assassination of Dr. King propelled the creation of Black studies at Harvard. As a result of Black student agitation, a student-faculty committee under the chairmanship of economics professor Henry Rosovsky issued a report in January 1969 recommending the creation of a degree-granting program in Afro-American studies, a research center in Afro-American studies, a Black cultural center, improvement of the program in African studies, and a sharp increase in the number of Black graduate students. It was a strong affirmation of change that validated the many grievances of Black students at Harvard and endorsed their ideas for change. But it did make two recommendations that would become points of contention. The Rosovsky Report recommended that majors (or concentrators, at Harvard) in Afro-American studies also complete a second major, and that faculty in Black studies also hold appointments in other departments. Thus, decisions over faculty hiring and promotion would be made in concert with another department—and since every other department at Harvard was virtually all white, this granted those with a poor record in hiring African Americans, and little experience in Black subject matter, authority over faculty in Black studies. The rule requiring double majors also suggested that Black studies was not sufficiently developed or academically rigorous to stand alone as a major. But for the members of the Rosovsky Committee, this model was in many respects ideal because it brought a new, politicized area of study into the broader curriculum in a way that tethered it to the preexisting culture and norms of the college. It was the responsible, sensible choice, designed to affirm the high standards of the institution.¹⁸

Between January and April 1969, students in the Association of African and Afro-American Students at Harvard and Radcliffe (AAAS) conducted their own investigation into the best way to establish Black studies at Harvard, and came to a different conclusion. They concluded that a traditional department was the best means of ensuring stature, permanence, and greater autonomy over faculty selection. (Of course, there is no such thing as complete departmental autonomy in hiring and promotion, since the college and university must ratify such decisions.) Michael Thelwell, a founding member of the Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, summed up this view when he noted that traditional departments “have, over the years, displayed no interest in incorporating the black experience, a

black perspective, or even Negro faculty-members into their operations. What should now dispose us to trust them? And even if we should, how will they, after centuries of indifference, suddenly develop the competence and sensitivity which would enable them to do an acceptable job?"¹⁹ Similarly, AFRO came to view the requirement for a double major as onerous and a result of a double standard.

Of course there were other issues roiling Harvard in the spring of 1969, and the struggle for Black studies got bound up with the antiwar movement, specifically the effort to abolish the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. Students for a Democratic Society led a takeover in April of University Hall, and when the administration called in the police to forcibly evict the students, it inflamed the campus and caused a majority of the student body to go on strike. The call for a Black studies department became one the demands. April was filled with intense, heated debates among students and faculty over the form and nature of Black studies.²⁰ Students Jeff Howard and Wesley Profit spoke at the April 17 meeting of the faculty, seeking to persuade them to support AFRO's vision for Black studies. "We're not here to intimidate you, to accuse you, or hopefully, to argue with you" Howard began in his remarks to the assembly, but in "a spirit of cooperation." He called their proposal "not a repudiation of the Rosovsky Report" but "a friendly amendment." That spring a standing committee comprised exclusively of faculty had begun to design an Afro-American studies program, and troubled by some of their decisions, AFRO proposed a formal role for students. Process, or the role of students, became an additional point of divergence between AFRO and the committee, although the students argued that their participation was faithful to the original intent of the Rosovsky Report. At the faculty meeting, Jeff Howard quoted the report's endorsement of students' participation, in light of their "high degree of interest, knowledge, and competence in this emerging and in some ways unique field of studies."

Henry Rosovsky spoke next, defended the current plan and process, and reminded the faculty that a double concentration was part of the original Rosovsky Report. But in a seeming concession, he noted, "It is possible that Afro-American studies will be a major on its own in the future." And then, in apparent contradiction to what the standing committee was in the midst of doing, he added that it was "best to let the incoming chairman set the lasting guidelines of the program." But he rejected student membership in the standing committee, because it would grant students a voice in the hiring of tenured faculty members.

At a follow-up meeting on April 22, the faculty voted in favor of AFRO's proposal, giving Afro-American studies departmental status, "offering a standard field of concentration," and adding six students to the standing committee, three to be chosen by AFRO and three by potential concentrators.²¹ Clyde Lindsay, a student, hailed the faculty resolution. "I consider this a great victory for black students and for American education." But Rosovsky immediately resigned from the standing committee, saying such a major change in educational policy "should be studied carefully and considered in a calm atmosphere." Richard Musgrave, another economist, took his place as chair.²²

Two points need to be added to this account of the department's origins. First, in his remarks to the faculty on April 17, Professor Rosovsky noted that the standing committee had already offered a tenured position to three distinguished scholars: two had declined and one was still weighing the offer; and it had offered visiting faculty positions to two other individuals, who had each turned them down. "To our knowledge," Rosovsky stated, "no one declined because he found fault with our program." After students had acquired voting rights on the standing committee, opponents of this development contended that it would obstruct hiring, since, in their view, no self-respecting scholar would submit to a review by undergraduates. Similarly, many faculty and administrators at Harvard and elsewhere came to believe that the departmental structure also thwarted hiring in Black studies, since in their view most scholars would naturally prefer affiliation with an established discipline. But it is important to note that the difficulty in hiring faculty at Harvard preceded both the addition of students to the standing committee and the turn to departmental status. As we have already seen and will examine further, there were numerous challenges in recruiting faculty to teach Black studies, regardless of its structure.²³

Second, critics of the AFRO proposal subsequently promoted the notion that professors had voted for it under duress, in a pressure-filled atmosphere of student upheaval and rebellion. Exemplifying this portrayal, a story circulated that a Black student had come to the faculty meeting carrying a large knife. (It is perhaps relevant to recall that earlier that same month, an Associated Press photograph of Black student protesters at Cornell University carrying rifles and ammunition appeared on the covers of magazines and newspapers around the country.) The *Crimson* actually ran a photo of an unidentified Black male student walking on campus carrying a meat cleaver on the day of the faculty vote. But according to Wesley Profit, this student never spoke at the

meeting, and faculty members never saw the knife. The young man—who hoped to speak at the faculty meeting—had a dramatic, preacher-like style and thought that, for better effect, in the middle of his remarks he would take out the hatchetlike knife and slam it into podium. But Profit, fellow leader Skip Griffin, and other students refused to allow him to bring the knife into the faculty meeting. Profit said they all understood the historic nature of the day—it was evidently the first time students ever addressed the faculty, and the meeting was being broadcast on the college radio station. There was no need for a hatchet! The disappointed student departed and was later photographed walking with his girlfriend on campus, still carrying the knife. The *Crimson* photo likely helped to convince many at Harvard that a student had actually come to the faculty meeting with a knife, presumably with a threatening intent.²⁴

Still, despite the student strike and atmosphere of protest, faculty supporters of the resolution defended their vote, and the professors who worked with students on the standing committee expressed satisfaction with the process.²⁵ When Martin Kilson, an African American political scientist and member of the Rosovsky Committee, blamed the “political threats of the militant extremists” in AFRO for intimidating the faculty to allow a student role in organizing the department, Professor Jack Stein disagreed. He defended his vote, believing students had a legitimate concern over pedagogy and deserved the right to have a voice. In Kilson’s view, “only persons of tested scholarly abilities and training should be involved in the organization and administration of black studies curricula.” He found it galling that Harvard had allowed students to “*exercise scholarly authority*” over a “complex interdisciplinary field.”²⁶ However, the new chair of the standing committee, Richard Musgrave, denied the rumor that people were spurning their job offers because of the presence of students on the committee. The heavy competition for the few specialists in the field accounted for their difficulties, he reported.²⁷ Nevertheless, the faculty’s rejection of the Rosovsky plan in favor of AFRO’s was deeply resented by many at Harvard, some of whom would continue to fight for their vision of Afro-American studies notwithstanding the 1969 defeat.

The demand for greater student rights and voice was in fact widespread on American campuses in these years—students were even demanding voting rights in the U.S. Department of Education.²⁸ So Harvard was hardly unique. Still, student leadership was particularly associated with Black studies for a simple reason. Students—not

scholars—were responsible for the creation of Black studies programs. It is absolutely vital to appreciate this distinction if one wants to truly understand the contentious early years of Black studies. “Black studies programs came into existence not because of the efforts of scholars who detected the cavernous lacunae in the curriculum vis-à-vis the Afro-American experience,” observed Tobe Johnson, a professor at Morehouse. “They came into existence primarily because of the pressures of black students and their white allies for a curriculum more relevant to that experience.”²⁹ This is not to downplay the paramount significance of sympathetic faculty and administrators. But the fact remains that, at most places, a petition drive, sit-in, demonstration, or strike, or the threat of these, led to the creation of new courses.

Indeed, on many campuses, the faculty initially rebuffed student entreaties for Black-content courses. “The bedrock foundation for the emergence of contemporary Black studies was laid by Black urban, lower-class students as they tried to get better Black studies courses from traditional departments,” noted education scholar Carlos Brosard.³⁰ Sadly, this group garnered very little credit for their founding role and faced a lot of criticism and scorn. As Carlene Young, a director of Black studies at UCLA, observed, “Black studies has been available to scholars for several generations.” But “it was not until the Black consciousness movement of the 1960s forced the issue that Afro-Americans began to be afforded their rightful place in the annals of the history and development of American society.”³¹

Harvard faced a question every campus faced. If students had demanded and won Black studies, who would give it form? Who would actually build the new departments and programs? The white faculty and administrators who had heretofore failed to integrate their faculties and curriculum? The one or two Black scholars who were on the faculty of the university, and who may or may not have been involved in the student push for Black studies? Or, would the Black students who had fought for it play a leading role in its implementation? Some people anticipated the student desire for involvement. “Since the black studies movement was initiated by black students rather than by teachers and educators,” one scholar predicted, “it can be assumed that the former will try to exercise a quasi-proprietary influence on the future development of black studies programs.”³²

Students did not demand the same degree of involvement everywhere, and it was not controversial everywhere—but the students’ sense of ownership over Black studies and their desire to be involved in forging it

was common. At Stanford, for example, a committee of four Black students, three Black professors, and two white professors oversaw the first year in Afro-American studies.³³ Students at Wesleyan formed a committee to review all candidates applying for Afro-American studies positions.³⁴ In the prospectus for the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell, James Turner wrote that “students will participate significantly in the direction and development of the Center” and “will be involved in matters of policy, curriculum and faculty recruitment.”³⁵

But there was hardly consensus on student involvement. As at Harvard, some people saw student involvement in faculty affairs as a sign of academic weakness. Many scholars suspected that the student activists demanding Black studies were driven more by emotional and political considerations than intellectual interest, and worried that their commitment to the new units would prove ephemeral or that universities would use Black studies to reinvent “separate but equal” and thus short-change Black students just as they were entering white universities in large numbers. The young historian John Blassingame applauded Black students for shining a light on discriminatory hiring practices, but worried that student preference for Black teachers would overlook knowledgeable whites and lead to the hiring of unqualified personnel. “Negro students ignore the possible crippling effects of hiring simply *any* black man,” he asserted, although, to be fair, the evidence does not indicate that most students had such a simple yardstick of evaluation when rejecting whites and demanding Black professors. When Columbia University hired white historian Eric Foner to teach a course in Black history, for example, some Black students took the course and also picketed it, recognizing the white professor’s qualifications, but viewing this as an advantageous opportunity to press Columbia to integrate the history department. And sure enough their protest contributed to the hiring of Nathan Huggins.³⁶

Blassingame’s biggest concern was what he saw as the immense political pressure emanating from students. “The threat to black intellectuals is real,” he wrote. “Not only do the black students demand that the teachers in black studies be Negroes, they also want them to have the right shade of ‘blackness.’ In essence, this means that the black scholar must have the right ideological leanings. As some of us succumb to the persuasive arguments to hop on the treadmill and try to keep up with the mercurial changes in the black ‘party line,’” he wrote, “serious scholarship is likely to suffer.”³⁷ As the Black studies department at San Francisco State in 1969–1970 illustrates, students who were well orga-

nized and possessed of a clear political agenda for Black studies could be dogmatic and intimidating toward Black faculty. But in most schools, students did not seek to exert that level of ideological control.

One area of student participation in departmental governance that troubled many scholars was the questioning of job applicants about the race of their spouses. In their view, this illustrated the risk of students assuming professional roles without the appropriate professionalization. Fairly or not, with the ascendancy of Black nationalism, students often interpreted the marital affiliations of Black scholars (men, in the main) as a sign of their larger communal affiliation and orientation. An interracial couple did not exemplify the idea of Black people coming together that animated much of the Black Power movement, and some felt that marriages of Black men to white women, in particular, constituted a race-based rejection of African American women. But the introduction of this issue in the hiring process signaled, for many scholars, an inappropriate entry of ideology into a professional context. During an interview for a job in the Black studies department at Lehman College in the Bronx, a committee of students asked the historian William Seraille about the racial identity of his wife. He happens to be married to a Black woman, and he got the job, but he remembers his surprise at the question. Blassingame described a friend's different experience. "After being approved by the faculty, he went before the black students to prove his ideological fitness," Blassingame wrote. "When he opened up his remarks to them by pointing out that he had a white wife, the students rejected him. In spite of his qualifications he was not hired."³⁸ Mary Jane Hewitt, an administrator at UCLA in the late 1960s, recalls the hostility encountered by African American scholar Sylvester Whitaker, who served very briefly as the director of the Center for African American Studies. "His ex-wife was white," she says. "And all the ladies he dated were white, and this is why he marvels today at Claudia Mitchell-Kernan having been a successful director of that center for all those years with a white husband, when he thinks about how they crucified him because of his white wife and white girlfriends." Ron Karenga's "guys" she recalls, gave Whittaker a hard time.³⁹

St. Clair Drake said that until 1967 the criticism he received for being married interracially came from whites, but then Black women began to question him. "At Roosevelt last year the Black Student Association wasn't having much to do with me," he noted, summing up the students' view of him this way: "The thing that is wrong with [Drake] is that he is a nigger that talks black and sleeps white." But

Drake criticized others for concealing from public knowledge the fact that they were sleeping with white women. In his view, he was at least honest and got married. Fifty-eight years old and a distinguished social scientist, Drake was one of the scholars that Harvard tried to hire to chair Afro-American studies, but he had already said yes to Stanford's same offer. When Harvard called, he said, "I felt like telling them, why didn't you ask me 20 years ago, when I really could have used the research facilities and support. But they wait until the kids are ready to burn the place down before they ask me."⁴⁰

This leads to another major challenge and point of contestation in the early Black studies movement—who was qualified and willing to teach Black studies? It was not easy to staff the scores of new Black studies programs, centers, and departments that sprang up across the country in 1969 and the early 1970s. A couple of hundred campuses launched search committees for specialists in Black studies—all at the same time. After Martin Luther King's assassination, Charles Hamilton discovered, "black professors (preferably with PhDs) became one of the most sought after commodities on the market."⁴¹ Black PhDs were the most in demand, but they were few in number. Of the thirteen thousand professional sociologists in 1970, for example, only eighty-five were Black.⁴² According to a survey in 1970, fewer than 1 percent of PhD holders in the United States were Black, and most in this group were over age fifty-five.⁴³ Spelman historian Vincent Harding was committed to staying in the South and teaching Black students. "I have received in the past several years, you have no idea how many offers to come teach in the North. This is a time that schools that were not interested in black teachers five years ago will do anything to get them." He made a passionate attempt to convince Black students and scholars to resist the brain drain of HBCUs and stay in or move to the South.⁴⁴

While still a graduate student at Northwestern in the late 1960s, John Bracey was flooded with job offers. Both he and James Turner, another Northwestern graduate student, joined African American studies programs before completing their doctorates, and their stories further illustrate the unusual or unconventional circumstances that often shaped hiring in the field. Turner became the first director of the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. A Black nationalist, he sought to recruit scholars of like mind and argued against "white-defined" academic qualifications. "They call them objective criteria, but these reflect colonial education," he felt. At Cornell, he argued for a hiring process where "there could be no judgment by whites, and no review

mechanism of the hiring of Blacks at all. Our definition of the program meant, in the first instance, that Black people must hire each other.”⁴⁵ John Bracey’s hiring in the Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts in 1972 was the ironic result of an even more unpopular political philosophy. W.E.B. Du Bois had instructed that the executor of his estate, Herbert Aptheker, also an historian and member of the Communist Party, accompany the gift of his personal papers to the University of Massachusetts. But the state legislature balked at the prospect of hiring this openly communist scholar, though they remained interested in acquiring Du Bois’s massive and highly valuable personal archive. Aptheker decided to take advantage of whatever leverage he might have and proposed that, in his place, the university add five additional faculty positions in Afro-American studies, one of which became Bracey’s position.⁴⁶

To be sure, not every young Black scholar who worked on African American subjects wanted to join a Black studies program. It is vital to remember that even though universities were designing new courses and programs, most academics did not regard the field as academically legitimate. Plus, many did not share the Black nationalist project of some of the field’s founders. James Turner encountered this dilemma in hiring at Cornell. “The problem we have found is finding Black people who can understand that their whole notion of scholarship has been so shaped by white people that they can’t see and think for themselves,” he declared. “Too many of them really believe that the stuff we are talking about is a compromise of intellectual integrity. They look at us and say, ‘I think you cats really want to discourage doing academic work.’” In Turner’s opinion, “the real problem is not simply personnel, but personnel who are inclined towards a Black orientation and who won’t blow the whole thing.”⁴⁷

Many young Black scholars likely questioned whether Black studies would even last, and may have viewed launching a career in the field as risky. On this reluctance by Black scholars, St. Clair Drake observed, “They want the security and prestige of being in a traditional department. Black studies might be a fad, and they’d be left out in the cold.”⁴⁸ Norvel Smith, the Black president of Merritt College in Oakland, alma mater of Huey P. Newton and home of one of the first Black studies departments, saw a significant tension between the career aspirations of many Black scholars and the political sensibilities of radical Black youth. “A black faculty member,” in his view, “likes to feel that his professional position is justified on a basis other than race, and he resents

the encumbrances of black students. . . . In addition, many faculty members are turned off by the student rhetoric.”⁴⁹ Charles Hamilton was inundated with job offers in the late 1960s; he chose not to join a Black studies program, deciding instead to join the political science faculty at Columbia University. While still a graduate student, Sterling Stuckey was invited to chair the new Department of African American Studies at Northwestern, but he declined and subsequently began his career in the history department. Jim Pitts, who also did his graduate work at Northwestern and later joined their sociology department, remembers the atmosphere in African American studies at Northwestern as “poisoned” and found the idea of working there unappealing.⁵⁰

Sometimes, this scenario was reversed, and a Black scholar on the faculty regardless of scholarly expertise was tapped to teach African American studies. Robert Singleton, an assistant professor of industrial relations at the University of California, Los Angeles, was asked by students to head the new Center for Afro-American Studies. He thinks his efforts to restrain police—who were rounding up all Black males after the shooting deaths of two students who were leaders in the Black Panther Party on campus in January 1969—made the students like him. At the time, he felt he was not qualified—he had not yet completed his PhD—but he agreed to serve on an interim basis because he felt that the job needed to be done.⁵¹

As for the prospect of hiring whites, the general view in the early years, especially, is summed up by the white chairman of a Black studies planning committee at a large, urban university: “Our students do not say that no white professor can teach any aspect of Black studies, but that few are competent to do so, few have the right attitudes or knowledge, and most importantly, the typical ‘liberal’ professor” allows the interracial class to become a rap session. Our black students do *not* want to be in the position of finding either that they are guinea-pigs for class discussion or that they know more of the subject at hand than the instructor.”⁵² Overall, Black students voiced a strong preference for Black professors in Black studies courses, while Black scholars expressed more openness to the participation of qualified non-Black professors. An all-Black search committee at Fordham University in the Bronx hired the white historian Mark Naison in 1970. Naison felt he had been hired “not only because of my research on black history but because the program’s founders saw teaching whites about African American history and culture as complementary to their mission of promoting black unity and empowerment.” He became “an evangelist for black

studies among white and Latino students,” and found that “some black students resented what I was doing.” But with the passage of time and large course enrollments, “the hostility dissipated” and Naison became integrated into the life of the program.⁵³

Historian Clayborne Carson attributes his quick ascent from computer programmer to professor to, in part, the significance of race in the early Black studies movement and the desire by Black students to have Black professors in this burgeoning field. As an auditor of a “new course” at UCLA on the history of race in the United States, taught by white historian Gary Nash, he ended up leading a discussion section. This propelled Carson to enter graduate school in 1969, and two years later he became an acting assistant professor. “The professors who engineered my recruitment were responding to forceful Black student demands for an African American history course taught by a Black professor. My hiring followed an interview session with leaders of the Black Student Union and was made possible by an expedient decision to deny tenure to a non-Black professor, Ronald Takaki, the superb historian who taught UCLA’s first African American history course.” Carson regretted the racial politics in the hiring process and the denial of tenure to Takaki, a Hawaiian of Japanese descent, who went on to a distinguished career in Asian American studies at Berkeley, where he helped to launch the ethnic studies department. For his part, Carson was relieved to leave the political hothouse of UCLA for a position at Stanford, where he built a career as one of the nation’s leading scholars of the civil rights movement.⁵⁴

As Harvard’s early attempts to hire in Afro-American studies show, the fact that many universities were competing for the same scholars, and that many Black PhDs shunned Black studies, made hiring difficult. Universities often turned to nontraditional sources of recruitment, which in turn served to reinforce the notion that Black studies was not a serious academic venture. John Blassingame, ever the gadfly, expressed sharp criticism of early Black studies instructors. Because of “their lack of commitment and the urgent demand,” Blassingame wrote, “many colleges are hiring all manner of people to teach black-oriented courses, especially if they are black. Social workers, graduate students who have just embarked on their graduate careers, high school teachers, principals, and practically anyone who looks black or has mentioned Negroes in an article, book or seminar paper are hired to teach Afro-American courses.” While clearly hyperbole, this statement does capture the sense of improvisation and scrambling by an unprepared academic establishment in

the wake of a major nationwide movement victory. Sterling Stuckey, who assisted in recruiting candidates for the African American studies department at Northwestern, concedes that it was difficult to find qualified people and thinks they made a few inappropriate hires. And ultimately, there were instances where inappropriate instructors either intimidated administrators into promoting them, or preserved their jobs as a result of the low opinion or misunderstanding of the field held by many in academia. These early hiring decisions adversely affected some departments for decades and certainly influenced the broader image of the field.⁵⁵ Michael Thelwell offered a broader perspective. He noted the concern of many that colleges would set up “hastily manufactured and meaningless programs” taught by “semi-literate dashiki-clad demagogues with nothing to offer but a ‘militant black rap.’” He had seen very few of these, although he acknowledged the risk. “It would be pointless to pretend that this danger does not exist in some small degree,” he wrote, “but my impression of the basic good sense of this student generation, and their serious commitment and sense of responsibility to themselves and their community, reassures me that this tendency will be a short-lived one.”⁵⁶

As much as faculty supporters of Black studies wanted to be responsive to student demands, they also wanted quality programs, and many worried that an insufficient faculty supply would lead to a pattern of weak, understaffed programs that might cast the whole discipline in a bad light and put it in actual jeopardy. A few scholars proposed models to consolidate talent and guide the creation of the field in a more purposeful, coherent fashion. Vincent Harding called for a Commission for Black Education to plan and organize higher education for African Americans.⁵⁷ Expressing a popular idea, Melvin Drimmer argued for the development of a dozen or so centers for the teaching and study of Black history, and he envisioned Black colleges as the logical starting point.⁵⁸ Darwin Turner, the dean of the graduate school at North Carolina A&T, wanted both respectability and innovation in Black studies: “I am sufficiently traditional and black that I want to be certain that Afro-American studies programs are respectably staffed with a core of Ph.Ds. Otherwise the intellectual snobs of our campuses will cite the sparsity of them in the program to support their suspicion that Afro-American studies are designed for the dumb and disadvantaged, and good students may fear to become identified with a program stigmatized as intellectually inferior.” But at the same time, Turner defended the view that a broader range of talent should be tapped for the college

classroom. "I warn against the pompous pretense that a teacher cannot be used unless he has a master's or doctor's degree," he declared, figuring that "an organizer with ten years experience in the black ghetto could teach a course in sociology maybe better than someone whose research only came from libraries." He urged three solutions: finance and encourage Black students to attend graduate school; develop regional, cooperative Black studies centers; and utilize "those individuals who have a lot of practical experience but lack an advanced degree." This was already happening for creative writers and artists. "Ralph Ellison and Gwendolyn Brooks would be hired at almost any institution in the country," Turner noted.⁵⁹

After losing St. Clair Drake to Stanford and being turned down by John Hope Franklin, who held a distinguished professorship at the University of Chicago and moreover had no interest in joining a department of Black studies, Harvard hired Ewart Guinier, a lawyer, former trade unionist, and longtime Black community leader, to chair the new Department of Afro-American Studies. As a nonacademic operating in an elite academic environment, Guinier called upon prominent scholars for counsel and advice, notably Charles Hamilton, Hollis Lynch, and especially Sterling Stuckey. But Guinier encountered enormous challenges in getting Harvard to fulfill its commitments to the department. As Hollis Lynch later observed, "The Harvard administration did not share Professor Guinier's grand ambition and design for his Department and certainly put many obstacles in the way of actualizing them."⁶⁰ The university succeeded in undermining or reversing key victories of 1969, including the student role in hiring, full faculty appointments, inclusion of African studies, and development of a research institute. Faculty and student leaders in Afro-American studies managed to preserve its departmental character, but the toll in demoralization and shrinkage was high.

A review of the department by internal and external scholars in 1972 provided the first occasion to trim its sails. By this point, the department had graduated its first class of fourteen concentrators—who were headed to law, business, and graduate schools. It had ten instructors, although Guinier remained the sole tenured professor, and offered a wide range of courses each semester in African and African American studies. Guinier had a global conception of Black studies, believing that it "should cover the history and culture of Black people from ancient times to the present," including "experiences in Africa and North America and the Caribbean."⁶¹ The students, course offerings, and faculty



FIGURE 17. Lerone Bennett and Ewart Guinier, the first chair of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Harvard, converse at a conference of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History.

were diverse, with white students generally comprising 40 to 60 percent of course enrollments. But nonetheless a portrait of a racially exclusive and philosophically separatist department was widely promoted. Political scientist Martin Kilson—the first tenured Black faculty member at Harvard—had served on the Rosovsky Committee and was a firm believer in the benefits of joint appointments, program status, and traditional faculty control for African American studies. He was severely disappointed in the April 1969 faculty decision and became a vocal critic of the department in the 1970s. He portrayed departmental status as “tragic” and argued that it made Black studies “academically and technically diffuse and disoriented,” and put this generation of Black students at a disadvantage. “They will be dilettantes at best, and charlatans at worst,” he warned.⁶²

During the 1972 review of the department, Kilson circulated his “Memorandum on Direction of Reforms in Afro-American Studies Curriculum at Harvard University,” which expressed his objections, especially the idea that students should not be able to major exclusively in

Afro-American studies. Aggressively seeking to shape the review, Kilson characterized the department as a hostile Black island in the erudite sea of Harvard. He assailed the inclusion of students on the executive committee, describing them as “black racist—if not black racist—in outlook” and blaming them for the lack of white teachers, who in his view had a kind of right to be there. (And there actually had been white instructors in the department.) Kilson wanted “the rich talent of white scholars at Harvard” to be brought to bear on the struggling department, even suggesting, remarkably, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, whose *Beyond the Melting Pot*, had questioned the vitality and contribution of Black American culture. Glazer and Moynihan were part of a generation of white “experts” whose scant encounter with Black history and culture had given rise to the Black studies movement.⁶³ Contacted by Harvard for his view of the Afro-American studies department’s status, political scientist Ron Walters expressed concern about Martin Kilson’s characterization of the department. Black studies did not politicize the university, he argued, “it was already politicized by a thousand issues more volatile than black studies.” Moreover, in forming the department, “Harvard recognized that any legitimate black effort is controlled and developed by black people.” Walters expressed frustration that Kilson would reduce this quest to “the dictates of a bunch of ‘militants.’” It is “the desire of *those involved* in black studies whether they be militants or moderates,” he declared, “to have an authentically black educational experience.”⁶⁴

Ewart Guinier felt that many influential people at Harvard wished to undo the faculty vote of April 1969, so the department produced its own self-evaluation as a means of ensuring that their perspective—many accomplishments despite weak university support—would get a public airing. Harvard graduate students Andrea Rushing and Wesley Profit helped put together “The First Three Years.” It was released two days before the official review, and in Profit’s view, it saved the department. “The report prevented the university from dismantling the department,” he believes. He credits Guinier’s seasoned organizing skills and willingness to fight back as essential to the survival of Afro-American studies as a department.⁶⁵

The review committee, headed by federal judge Wade H. McCree Jr., found a middle ground between the department and its critics. The committee’s report praised the dedication of the department’s chair and concentrators, yet many of its recommendations undercut the department’s vision. It urged Harvard to reaffirm its commitment to the

department and to immediately hire at least two more senior faculty; recommended but did not require joint majors; suggested greater focus on Afro-Americans and less attention to African studies; dissolved the standing committee—which had been the vehicle for including students in faculty recruitment—but kept students on all other departmental committees; created a new interdepartmental faculty search committee; and urged creation of the delayed W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research. It also recommended (but did not require) that joint appointments with other departments be used to facilitate faculty recruitment. The committee found that “one of the problems of attracting eminent black and white scholars to the Department is the fact that they have earned acceptance in ‘conventional’ disciplines at other institutions which they would not want to forsake by going into a department which appears to be ‘on trial’ and/or accorded second-class status by Harvard.”⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the review, the marginalization and isolation of the department intensified. The effort to assemble a stable tenure-track faculty remained a challenge, and it took several more years to hire the second tenured faculty member, the music scholar Eileen Southern, who was jointly appointed to the music department. The sociologist Orlando Patterson had joined the department as an assistant professor but later moved to sociology after an acrimonious falling out with Guinier. The department’s first internal tenure candidate, Ephraim Issac, a specialist in African languages and a Harvard PhD, was denied tenure but won a settlement after it was discovered that the college had wrongfully instructed an external review committee that Issac had to be jointly appointed in order to get tenure.⁶⁷

In the meantime, Professor Kilson escalated his criticism of the department and aimed his guns at Harvard’s use of affirmative action in undergraduate admissions, which, like Afro-American studies, he saw as leading to an inferior Black presence at Harvard. Kilson used the words *militant* and *militancy* repeatedly in diagnosing this apparent problem. The effects of the “separatism and militancy” of the late 1960s, he insisted, “were having a disastrous impact on the academic achievement and intellectual growth of Negro students.”⁶⁸ Kilson spent much of 1973 publicly disparaging the qualities and abilities of Black Harvard students and even took it upon himself to lobby for shift in admissions policy. In a lengthy memo to the university president and deans of the college, Kilson complained that many Black students admitted in the past six years lack a “*desire or capacity to acculturate to competi-*

tive academic and intellectual lifestyles” and urged a reconsideration of admissions criteria.⁶⁹ In yet another letter to Harvard administrators, he complained that “there are still too many black girls recruited into Radcliffe who are simply marginal intellectually; they are not really capable of or not really interested in superior intellectual and academic performance at an elite institution like Harvard.”⁷⁰

A series of articles in the *Harvard Bulletin* launched the public phase of his attack. He reiterated his concern that “the future quality of the Afro-American elites or professional classes is at stake” and alleged that the Afro-American studies department, “like others around the country, was created with scant concern for academic or intellectual standards.” He questioned the competence of Black faculty and staff hired as a result of student protest—which included most Black faculty and staff at Harvard. He urged a move away from admitting “ghetto-type blacks” and toward favoring those possessed “of a strong preference for individualistic acculturation.” Like some other traditionalist critics of the Black campus movement, Kilson sought to portray himself as its truest friend through his unabashed and fearless, and evidently lone, insistence on rigor. But the *Harvard Bulletin* researched some of Kilson’s claims and reported that between 75 and 80 percent of Black students admitted in recent years “would not be categorized as disadvantaged,” and found as well that “Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds do equivalent work to that done by middle-class blacks, in terms of rank list and grade-point averages.”⁷¹

The *Bulletin* provided space for rebuttals, and a group of students answered with aplomb. They assailed the collective portrait of Black incompetence that Kilson had put forward. It is apparent, they argued, “that by making his generalizations, Kilson denies to Harvard blacks the very individuality which he accuses them of rejecting and which for himself he holds so dear. Blacks at Harvard are such a heterogeneous lot that only someone with the professor’s lively imagination could even conceive of the kinds of collective attitudes with which he associates us.” The students debunked his claims of lower Black qualifications by pointing to the (comparatively high) SAT scores of Black admits in the preceding five years. Much of their dispute mirrored larger debates about the meaning of Blackness in the aftermath of Black Power. For Kilson, “‘black solidarity behavior’ is a problem—an obstruction to high academic achievement and upward social mobility that must be eliminated before blacks can approach the nirvana of middle-class American society.” The students rejected this view, saying, “He genuinely believes, it

seems, that there is no significance in cultural blackness unless it apes or imitates white cultural norms every step of the way.” They offered a strong defense of cultural pluralism and the mutually constituted nature of Black and American identities. But their chief intervention was in vigorously questioning the portrait he had painted of them—as provincial, anti-intellectual, and victims and purveyors of groupthink.⁷²

Law professor Derrick Bell, too, offered a rebuttal, noting that Kilson had been sounding this alarm for several years. “Like a bawdy tune with lyrics one would dare not repeat in public,” Bell wrote, clearly fed up, “‘Martin’s Melodies’ sing almost gleefully of black intellectual unreadiness in terms so broadly indicting the race that no sophisticated white would dare repeat them, however much he might agree with their expressions. It is no surprise that University publications have given Kilson’s statements so much space. One can almost see the advocates of meritocracy rejoicing each time Kilson takes aim at the shortcomings of blacks in academe. . . . It may be that Professor Kilson is trying to help black students by his repeated public attacks. But as every social scientist should know, oppressed minorities are burdened by doubts of self-worth. Public criticism by a member of that group (particularly one as eminent as Professor Kilson) that focuses on shortcomings and ignores positive values will be used by the majority to justify continuance rather than cessation of oppressive behavior.”⁷³

On another occasion when Bell rose to the defense of Black students after a series of public criticism by Kilson, he noted that the Black community at Harvard had tried for a long time to ignore “Kilson’s vicious slanders.” But Bell had come to worry that administrators might mistake their silence for support.⁷⁴ Kilson was persistent. He reprised the essays as “The Black Experience at Harvard,” for the *New York Times Magazine* a few months later, and in the first sentence declared that Black students “have reached a crisis” created “in large measure by black separatism and militancy.” The essay is filled with lament for the glory days of his college years, and alarm and despair over what he sees as Black intolerance and failure on campus. “Since 1971,” he claimed without an illustration, “the pressures for conformity to black-solidarity behavior have been well-nigh overwhelming at Harvard.” But more damaging was his assertion that “black-solidarity forces are distinctly anti-intellectual and antiachievement in orientation,” citing as evidence student pride in participating in “community affairs” and “posturing ‘Black power’ in relation to political issues like Harvard’s Gulf Oil investments in Africa.”

After the *Times* essay, Ewart Guinier offered a series of forceful responses in various media. "What has made the situation at Harvard so sadly disturbing is that, while white antagonists of Afro-American studies have remained almost completely silent, one or two Negro professors . . . have engaged in an orgy of rage against us." He regretted waiting so long to answer the attacks and contended that it had interfered with faculty recruitment.⁷⁵ Subsequently, in what became a final public embarrassment and major campus conflict, and in defiance of the recommendations by several committees, the administration excluded the department and Guinier from the planning and creation of the Du Bois Institute, sparking an outpouring of criticism by Professor Guinier on the eve of his retirement. Henry Rosovsky was dean of the college, and Derek Bok was president. Guinier released a strongly worded nineteen-page statement in which he accused Bok and Rosovsky of undermining the department, and surrendering to "forces supporting white supremacy within Harvard." There had been no success in making joint appointments ever since the McCree committee had recommended it as a recruitment tool. Guinier had long opposed this strategy, saying it deterred those interested in African American studies, and noted that he found it "absurd" to grant such a leading role to departments with histories of racist scholarship and all-white hiring practices. Still, they had tried to hire John Blassingame jointly, but the history department had rejected him; and according to Guinier, when they tried to hire him exclusively in Afro-American studies the university failed to provide sufficient research funds. Bok and Rosovsky termed Guinier's words "intemperate" and countered that they were seeking to strengthen the department. Bok appointed Andrew Brimmer, a Black former member of the Federal Reserve, to head a panel charged with developing the Du Bois Institute.⁷⁶

But the exclusion of the department from the planning process for the institute also galvanized students, leading the Du Bois Institute Student Coalition to conduct a sit-in at Massachusetts Hall. For his part, Guinier accused administrators of abandoning "any pretense of manners, of courtesy, or civility in relating the Afro-American Studies Department." Their intent, he insisted, was "to hold black people up to ridicule and humiliation and, finally, to isolate and pistol whip us into submission as the entire Harvard community watches. Once and for all," he declared, "they want to teach us a lesson, to show us our place."⁷⁷ As a result of these heated and widely publicized conflicts, lack of administrative support, and divergent views of how to develop

African American studies, the department at Harvard remained very small until the early 1990s. Given that the positive media attention paid to Black studies at Harvard in later years helped to raise the profile of the department and likely enhanced the stature of the discipline in academe more generally, one can imagine that the spate of negative stories penned by Kilson and others in the 1970s fueled a broader skepticism of, if not contempt for, African American studies in general.⁷⁸

The Harvard story seemed to confirm a discourse of crisis in, even failure of, Black studies that permeated discussions and representations of the field in the 1970s. A headline in the *Wall Street Journal* blared: “Black Studies Founder as Student Interest Declines and Faculties Grow More Skeptical.” The *Washington Post* announced: “Once Popular Black Studies Now Attracting Only a Handful of Students.”⁷⁹ Black studies “is in deep trouble,” declared the *Black Scholar* under the headline “Politics of the Attack on Black Studies,” which at least reframed the character of the crisis. In that article, Robert Allen found that three hundred programs had closed in the early 1970s, a dramatic but inflated figure.⁸⁰ As the fate of open admissions at the City University of New York demonstrated, widespread budget cuts during the recession of the mid-1970s had a devastating effect on new programs. At a 1975 conference titled “The Future of Black Studies,” with more than a hundred program directors in attendance, all but one reported financial cutbacks.⁸¹ “To survive and succeed,” one critic noted, “Black programs required the support of the very structures they were designed to counterpose. This basic contradiction was not properly analyzed, understood or confronted.” As a result, the new units were underfunded, given low status, and marginalized, and predictably this negatively affected student perceptions.⁸²

Challenges to the discipline’s academic legitimacy were common throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Leaders in Black studies regularly complained about the lack of support and acceptance from administrators and colleagues and the seemingly unending quest to “prove” its legitimacy. Carlene Young wrote, “Afro-American studies have been forced to struggle against continual assaults on their limited resources and structural integrity while maintaining strong academic programs, highly qualified faculty, and good enrollments.” Moreover, she lamented, “there are still too many in the Academy who resent the ‘intrusion’ and, as a consequence, agitate for the demise of Afro-American Studies.”⁸³

The Ford Foundation’s relationship to African American studies illustrates how the desire for self-determination and African American

intellectual leadership profoundly shaped the early Black studies movement. Ford began an association with Black studies in 1968 when it funded a high-profile conference at Yale University. The young radicals Nathan Hare, Ron Karenga, and Gerald McWorter debated professors David Brion Davis, Robert Ferris Thompson, and Martin Kilson, showcasing the generational and political cleavages and challenges in the early Black studies movement. Most people at Ford held a conservative or traditionalist view of Black studies' best path—much like Rosovsky's at Harvard—and urged this view in grant making. "I would not favor support for the notion that only Blacks can teach or understand this subject, and that therefore the Department of Black studies must be separately organized," a top official informed foundation president McGeorge Bundy. "I fear it will become a cultural war camp, marked by myth-making and collective self-deception."⁸⁴ As we have seen, many liberal leaders of this era conflated departmental status with a commitment to racial separatism and, as the quote further suggests, had deep reservations about the intellectual legitimacy of African American studies. Roger Wilkins, a young African American program officer, urged Bundy to include the "younger and angrier Black scholars" in the advisory process. But as Farah Griffin has shown, Bundy instead heeded the advice of Sir Arthur Lewis, a Princeton-trained, Caribbean-born economist, who urged support for programs that aspired to the same standards as the established disciplines, as well as support for the production of more Black PhDs.⁸⁵

In 1969 Ford disbursed more than one million dollars to fourteen colleges, as well as to the Institute of the Black World, in order to help launch Black studies. A Ford-sponsored conference in Aspen, Colorado, in July 1970 dramatically illustrated the desire by Black scholars to assert control over the burgeoning field and to convey this stance to white philanthropists and scholars. Ford sponsored the Aspen conference in order to take stock of the new programs and examine, as one Ford official put it, "the intellectual underpinnings of black studies." To the Ford official's dismay, however, much of the discussion at Aspen focused instead on "questions of control and the political and ideological performance of black studies."⁸⁶ The conflict started before the conference had even begun, when Vincent Harding objected to the list of invitees—noting the absence of several key leaders in the Black studies movement and objecting to the inclusion of white scholars as "resource" people. "I thought the list of non-directors was a strange one," he wrote to historian Edgar Toppin, whom Ford had asked to chair the

event. "In light of the current intellectual and political mood among black people, I did not understand why there was a need to have any white scholars present to participate in a discussion on the future of Black studies," Harding wrote. "And it seemed very insensitive to include two who had publicly expressed serious questions about whether black scholars ought to control the definition of the black experience."⁸⁷

On the first day of the conference, Harding, Roscoe Brown, Andrew Billingsley, St. Clair Drake, and others issued a statement as the "Black Caucus of the Aspen Black Studies Seminar." "Of major concern to us is the fact that Black expertise and leadership did not have the major role in conceptualizing and organizing the conference," they wrote, calling Ford's approach "reminiscent of the paternalistic ways in which White America has habitually treated Blacks throughout American history." Billingsley followed with his own stinging statement to the Ford officials, whom he lauded for supporting Black education, but criticized in this case for adopting "American white ways of doing things." "We do not mean to impugn the motives of anybody associated with it, but we do mean to say, as strongly as we can, that the effect was damaging." He "recommended very strongly that this mistake not be repeated again."⁸⁸

Ford interpreted the professors' protest as either political posturing or a rejection of integration. James Armsey, who as Ford's director of higher education in the 1960s had barred grants to segregated universities, prompting several private southern schools, like Duke, Emory, and Vanderbilt, to desegregate, answered with a speech defending the foundation. "You spent the first morning censuring the Ford Foundation in connection with this seminar," he began. The whole point of the conference, in his view, was for Ford grantees "to get together, compare notes, swap experiences, review problems, exchange learnings and consider plans for the future." Its success or failure, he claimed, depended on the participants. In his view, Ford organized the conference in response to the needs and desires of Black studies directors, although he conceded that they should have hired a Black-owned agency to organize the gathering. But then Armsey switched to offense. Referring to criticism of his opening night welcome, he said, "It was inevitable, I suppose, that my remarks would be considered either paternalistic or patronizing. . . . In the scheme of things today, there appears to be no way in which the conduct of a white person in my position can be considered open, above board, and honest." He accused the Black caucus of engaging in "repetitive catharsis," of going "through these rituals in part to remind the

white man of his guilt.” “That may be a useful purpose at times,” he declared, “but through overuse it can become self-defeating. By these tactics, you are driving your real white allies into isolation and opposition.” His final jab was the statement that the “only guilt” he felt in connection with Black studies was in relaxing “the normal standards of intellectual rigor in recommending grants.”⁸⁹

A program officer chimed in that he was “deeply disturbed at the separatist philosophy” of several participants at Aspen, singling out Harding and Billingsley. There was certainly a problem of translation at Aspen—as Ford officials took literally Armstead Robinson’s statement that the Black studies movement “represents the death of integration as a vital political imperative for Blacks in this country.” Ford was obviously not going to fund “the death of integration,” but Robinson’s longer comments make clear that he was referring to a redefinition of Black identity, not an abandonment of desegregation.⁹⁰

The directors of Black studies programs at Aspen voiced support for Harding’s and Billingsley’s critiques—although Ford officials hinted that some among the old guard, notably George Kelsey and Benjamin Quarles, had misgivings. Nevertheless, they all expressed surprise and dismay to discover that Ford had no intention of continuing to fund collegiate Black studies programs. Ford claimed to have always viewed its grants to Black studies programs as temporary, but their loss had a significant, often unanticipated, impact.⁹¹ Ford believed that universities should assume the role of funding their own academic programs, but it is also plausible that Ford was disinclined to renew robust support in the immediate aftermath of Aspen. In any event, Ford continued to offer funding to Black students in PhD programs, which it had begun in 1969. Ford’s support for Black studies resumed and expanded in the 1980s and beyond, benefiting not only major research universities such as Berkeley, Cornell, Harvard, UCLA, and Madison but also the field’s two major professional organizations: the National Council of Black Studies, and the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (formerly the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History). Importantly, in the 1980s, Ford also expanded fellowships for underrepresented minorities, which have played a significant part in funding young Black scholars.⁹²

In addition to external skepticism about the academic rigor or legitimacy of Black studies, internal debates arose about the role of political ideology and activism in Black studies. Would Black studies follow the political inspiration and aspirations of its student founders, or

would it move in a more traditional academic direction? Could it meet the expectation of some of its student founders and advance the Black revolution? Some professors pushed back, even when they often supported the larger thrust of the Black student struggle. A student in one of St. Clair Drake's classes at Stanford once asked him why they were sitting around talking about problems instead of being out there solving them. Drake answered, "There are intellectual tasks and there are street tasks for the black revolution, and my temperament and the university environment are more suited for the intellectual tasks."⁹³ During a visit to the University of Illinois in Urbana, Charles Hamilton witnessed an exchange that captured the chasm between militant students and traditionally trained scholars. A student asked, "Is the purpose of this program to help the student really change the society? Are we going to use the technology of the society to overthrow it?" Another student chimed in: "Are we going to have a program that teaches us how to make a buck, or turn this society upside down?" The Black professor responded, "We are not going to set up a separate university. After all, we are Americans."⁹⁴

Education scholar Reginald Wilson endorsed the political mission of Black studies in a speech at Wayne State University in 1971. Black studies "must be seen" as a "direct attack against the cultural imperialism of white scholarship and the deliberate oppression by white educational institutions of Black youth," he declared. Anticipating the later critique of multiculturalism as depoliticizing, he declared, "*I do not*, therefore, perceive of Black studies like any other ethnic studies: that is, providing more background information, resurrecting the history of a neglected minority, making the educational experience more relevant to a particular subculture, and instilling pride in the members of that subculture. All of these things are fine *and* necessary, but they are not enough." In the end, Wilson saw "the real role of Black studies as nothing less than the revolutionizing of the American educational experience," and felt that "Black educators must see the school as the center for community action and a resource for effecting social change."⁹⁵

But as the incorporation of Black studies took root, many scholars developed a more nuanced view of the relation between academic work and politics and began to pull back from the intense battles between Black nationalists, Marxists, and integrationists that had roiled many campuses. Roscoe Brown, the first director of the Institute of African American Affairs at New York University, felt that the question of whether Black studies should have an ideological mission had been a

“major stumbling block in the development and analysis of black studies programs.” He rejected the notion that Black studies could exist outside politics, since Black studies itself had forced the recognition that intellectual production had ideological content. He argued instead that it should not “espouse a specific ideology” such as integration or Black nationalism.⁹⁶

Carlos Brossard at the University of Pittsburgh reported “strong interpersonal warfare around ideological differences and national backgrounds of Blacks,” and identified the main binaries as Marxists versus Black nationalists, reformers versus revolutionaries, or academic-focused institution-builders versus community-oriented activist-types. In many respects, these differences were “healthy” and often productive for the growth of the discipline, but in some instances, he offered, they also “came with acrimony.” Some left-leaning scholars came to see the incidence of nonpublishing cultural nationalists serving long reigns as department chairs as a sign of the intentional marginalization of the field. Yet at the same time, Nathan Hare resigned from the *Black Scholar* in the mid-1970s, complaining that the journal had been taken over by “instant Marxists” and that Black nationalists were getting insufficient exposure.⁹⁷

These ideological conflicts intruded into the new journals and professional organizations for the field. At a meeting of the African Heritage Studies Association at Wayne State in the 1970s, Gerald McWorter, a Marxist sociologist and activist, presented “a sharp polemic against” Stokely Carmichael and poet Haki Madhubuti. He remembers the session as so heated and jam-packed that other sessions at the conference were cancelled. In the morning, McWorter debated Madhubuti, and in the afternoon, he debated Carmichael. It was “very intense,” McWorter, now Abdul Alkalimat, remembers, and “kept going all day long.” In his view, the key political question was: “Is the battle we face a fight against racism or is the battle a fight against imperialism?”⁹⁸ Alkalimat did not shy from ideological confrontation. A couple of years later, he organized a Chicago-based Illinois Council for Black Studies, and when in 1982 Illinois hosted the annual conference of the National Council of Black Studies, and Alkalimat won election to its board, the nationalist-dominated body challenged the tally and ultimately succeeded in keeping him off. To many this appeared unfair, and according to Rhett Jones, many scholars “abandoned organized Black Studies entirely, others left the national organization—now viewed as nationalist controlled—and concentrated their energies at the state level or on

individual African-American Studies units.”⁹⁹ Many worried that instead of being enriched by this ideological fervor, the new discipline had been weakened.

Gradually, as the demands of incorporation into the academy became felt, and as the cohort who fought for Black studies either moved on or were pushed out, the sense that Black studies was serving broader Black communities and remained committed to a broader political mission began to fade. This was not true everywhere, and it was an uneven process. Public universities in California experienced this shift in the most wrenching and acute way, as student and scholar activists on so many campuses were barred from organizing Black and Third World studies units. An ex-student dramatized it this way: “When we left, Black studies lost its political edge. It was taken over by either poverty pimp-type hustlers, or straight traditional academic types. Either way, that’s not what we fought for.”¹⁰⁰

Several activists came to see Black studies units as structured to quell student militancy, with chairs caught in the cross fire between disappointed, militant students and the administration. Armstead Robinson, a leader of the struggle at Yale, felt the programs that were created were “the subverted products of what Black students were trying to produce after Martin Luther King died.”¹⁰¹ In the early 1970s, a journalist found “most black studies programs in California have settled into an uneasy but working relationship in the academic world,” but “in the process, black studies lost most of its most strident supporters, many of whom now brand the programs as ‘meaningless.’” Former Howard and San Francisco State professor Nathan Hare became a leading proponent of the idea that Black studies had failed to fulfill its mission. “As it is typically taught, black studies is not particularly relevant,” he said. “It has to relate to everyday life, but instead it’s the same old abstract kind of learning.” He felt it should “express the ideology, goals and thought of the black struggle.”¹⁰² An assessment of the field in 1971 found that “many programs which grew out of struggles for ‘autonomy’ and ‘nation-building’ have already been sucked back fully into the dominating university structures.”¹⁰³

Student activist Jack Daniels had coauthored the widely circulated “Black Paper for Black Studies” a seventy-page prospectus for a School for Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, which advocated a unit deeply connected to the Black community, Black liberation, and nation building. But a few years later, after becoming a professor, he felt that “the great debate” between scholarship and activism was “stretch-

ing black studies' internal fibers to the breaking point." The political origins of Black studies were necessary, Professor Daniels now declared, but they had become an "albatross and must be removed from the neck of Black Studies." He argued that the discipline would ultimately rise or fall based not on its activist merits or profile but on its ability to mark out new intellectual terrain and produce compelling scholarship. "Black studies is indeed one of the most significant challenges ever presented to American colleges and universities." The critical need was not for a master plan, or new theories, or greater ideological warfare, but "basic research." There "simply cannot be viable Black studies instruction or viable Black studies community programs until viable basic research furnishes the data for instruction and application." He said the shortage of faculty was real, but that the only response was to develop more. "New trails must be blazed. . . . Intellectual and spiritual giants have preceded us," he declared, "and we must heed their legacies." He advocated abandoning the ever present reactive stance—we all know the limitations of white scholarship, he said; now we must become the agenda setters, forget Moynihan, Glazer, and the like, and make ourselves the new experts.¹⁰⁴

As they continued the effort to give meaning to Black studies, scholars also focused on institution building in order to ensure the field's survival. Documenting the rise of the field was part of this impulse. An influential early effort was Nick Aaron Ford's *Black Studies: Threat or Challenge*, published in 1973. His attention to white and Black campuses and selection of two-year community colleges, as well as elite four-year institutions, as case studies conveyed the breadth of the movement and its extensive national impact. He collected data on more than two hundred programs, identified seven major objectives for Black studies, and argued that it was a "threat" in that it challenged racist education and scholarship. Additionally, Ford's insistence on the long history of Black scholarship and his discussion of such pioneering scholars as historian and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, historian Carter G. Woodson, sociologist Charles E. Johnson, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, historian Benjamin Quarles, philosopher Alain Locke, and others helped to raise awareness among a new generation that Black studies was by no means "new," and that it in fact rested on a few generations of Black scholarship.¹⁰⁵ Ford found that most instructors in Black studies programs were without rank or tenure, but another study ten years later found marked improvement in both indices.¹⁰⁶ Since its creation, there have been numerous efforts to measure the size of the emerging

discipline, with varying estimates of the number of Black studies centers, programs, and departments. In 1974 *Black Scholar* editor and historian Robert L. Allen reported that the five hundred colleges that had provided full-scale Black studies programs three years earlier had dropped to two hundred. A survey of the field conducted in 1983 found that, “at its zenith, the number of programs and departments reached no more than 300 formally organized units.”¹⁰⁷ A 1995 article declared the existence of seven hundred ethnic studies programs in the United States. Numerous other tabulations and surveys have been done and continue to pour forth.

A professional structure for African American studies was emerging, exemplified by the formation of the National Council of Black Studies (NCBS) in 1975. The NCBS originated from the efforts of faculty in North Carolina, under the leadership of Bertha Maxwell, a rare female leader in the early Black studies movement. They endeavored to form a national body and had a series of organizational meetings in Atlanta, Boulder, Columbus, and Princeton. Another stream of activity that ultimately flowed into the NCBS emerged from a group of Black studies directors who first met at a conference Rosslyn, Virginia, in 1972 and subsequently formed their group into the National Africana Accreditation and Review Panel. The program for the first NCBS conference in 1977 showed the preoccupation in the early years with professionalization and gaining legitimacy, rather than scholarship, which was the focus of only one session at the weekend event. Other sessions at the conference were titled “The Case for and against the Standardization of Black Studies,” “Evaluating Black Studies Programs: Establishing the Critical Ground Rules,” and “Building a Black United Front: Black Studies and the Black Community.” Illustrating the continuing male face of the field, the program listed seventy-two male speakers and sixteen women. In line with an emerging consensus among scholars, the NCBS took the official position that departmental status was the preferred structure for African American studies and urged other units “to establish the long-range goal of achieving departmental status.” Indeed, more than twenty-five years later, the Afro-American studies program at Yale, which was often touted in the 1970s as a success compared to that of Harvard, achieved departmental status.¹⁰⁸

Reflecting the new ethos of self-determination and racial solidarity, this period in U.S. history saw a rapid proliferation of Black professional organizations, and academia helped lead the way. Black caucuses formed in the traditional disciplines would play a major role in opening

up opportunities and visibility for scholars of color. The National Conference of Black Political Scientists was formed in 1969 at Southern University, the largest public HBCU in the country. The Association of Black Sociologists was founded in 1970 as the Caucus of Black Sociologists. The Association of Black Psychologists was founded in San Francisco in 1968 and consists of professionals rather than academics, but its goals and ethos very much reflect the era's fusion of Black nationalist politics and professional commitments. The mission statement of the Association of Black Anthropologists, formed in 1970, continues to embody the transformative effects of Black studies movement. In 2010 the Association's Web site declared that the Association "will achieve its mission by ensuring that people studied by anthropologists are not only objects of study but active makers and/or participants in their own history. We intend to highlight situations of exploitation, oppression and discrimination. Further it is our objective to analyze and critique social science theories that misrepresent the reality of exploited groups while at the same time construct more adequate theories to interpret the dynamics of oppression." This mission expresses a strong critique of the history of anthropology in the United States and a reformulation of its mission.¹⁰⁹

To be sure, the professional organization of Black scholars began well before the 1960s. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History had been founded in 1915, and its *Journal of Negro History* and annual conferences greatly enhanced the development of scholarly collaboration and networking in the new discipline. Moreover, the College Language Association, an organization of Black college teachers of English and foreign languages, had been founded in 1937. A host of journals appeared in the 1970s to help anchor the field, including *The Black Scholar*, the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, and the *Journal of Black Studies*. These joined older journals from the long and thriving history of Black scholarship, such as the *Journal of Negro History*, *Phylon*, and the *Journal of Negro Education*. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the *Journal of Negro Education* was indispensable to documenting the growth of Black studies and publishing a variety of perspectives on its organization and mission.

In sum, as the focus shifted from Black students to Black scholars in the making of African American studies, new styles, visions, and sensibilities took root. A cohort of Black faculty emerged after the building takeovers and sit-ins, and they fought to create Black studies in keeping with the vision, to some extent, of student activists. But it was not easy.

These scholars faced administrative opposition, student pressure, and professional obligations. Unexpectedly, the seemingly never-ending battle of incorporation absorbed and drained the political energies of Black studies faculty, distracting attention from community leadership and other types of political engagement that Black student leaders had once envisioned as central to the project. As the years passed, new political tensions and debates emerged within the professional orbit of Black studies as scholars sought to figure out the best way to ease the battles, gain resources and personnel, and most important, win respect and recognition.

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85. Several commentators in this period also referred to student deaths at Texas Southern, where a 1967 police assault had wounded students and killed a police officer.

86. "The Greater Outrage," *Black Collegian*, September–October 1973.

87. Fred Prejean, transcript of remarks, Smith-Brown Memorial Service; Prejean, interview; Roy Reed, "Two Dead—It Was a Predictable Tragedy," *New York Times*, November 19, 1972, E4.

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89. E.C. Harrison, "Student Unrest on the Black College Campus," *Journal of Negro Education* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1972): 114.

90. *Ibid.*, 113.

CHAPTER 6. THE COUNTERREVOLUTION ON CAMPUS

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2. Eugene Genovese, "Black Studies: Trouble Ahead," in *New Perspectives on Black Studies*, ed. John Blassingame (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 107.

3. See especially Stephen G. Hall, *A Faithful Account of the Race: African American Historical Writing in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

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22. Robert Reinhold, "Key Aide Scores Vote at Harvard," *New York Times*, April 24, 1969, [www.proquest.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/](http://www.proquest.com/turing.library.northwestern.edu/), accessed July 23, 2006.

23. Henry Rosovsky, quoted in "Minutes, Special Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University."

24. Wesley Profit, telephone interview by author, July 28, 2005. For example, English professor Alan Heimart, who spoke in favor of the resolution and was sympathetic to the students, later told a graduate student that a student had come to the meeting with a knife. Arnold Rampersad, conversation with author, May 13, 2005, Stanford, California.

25. A student member of the committee, Myles Link, remembers that the students "were very engaged" in the process but were not of one mind. He recalls that there was "a lot of tension" in the meetings, in part because faculty were not used to working with students. Myles Link, telephone interview by author, November 15, 2010. Based on minutes of standing committee meetings, there was a simultaneous commitment to rigor, as well as flexibility and innovation, in the establishment of the department. Generally, the students supported

more urgency and open-mindedness in hiring, while faculty hewed to time-honored criteria. For example, in one meeting, a student said, "It was important to get somebody on board soon because we are dealing with a limited quantity," while a professor "saw it as a situation in which the supply is expanding" and so would consider it "unfortunate to make a premature appointment." Standing committee meeting minutes, May 19, 1969, Myles Link personal collection, copy in author's possession.

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47. Turner, "Cornell."
48. "Black Studies Aim to Change Things," *New York Times*, May 15, 1969.
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50. Hamilton, conversation with author, March 2008, Chicago; Sterling Stuckey, interview by author, Chicago, June 19, 2008; Jim Pitts, telephone conversation with author, July 20, 2008.
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63. "Afro-Am Isolation Imminent Unless Department Integrates," *Harvard Independent*, January 6–12, 1972, Guinier Papers, Box 23, Folder 5, Schomburg Center.

64. Ronald Walters to Walter Leonard, December 21, 1971, BERC Papers, Box 17, Folder 11, Schomburg Center, emphasis in the original.

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66. Harvard University, *Report of the Committee to Review the Department of Afro-American Studies* (Cambridge, MA, October 1972), bulletin, copy in author's possession.

67. "A Statement of the Afro-American Studies Department on Tenure and the Ephraim Isaac Case," October 29, 1975, in National Council of Black Studies Papers, Box 1, Folder 10, Schomburg Center; Profit, telephone interview.

68. Martin Kilson, "Blacks at Harvard: Solutions and Prospects," *Harvard Bulletin*, June 1973, 31, Guinier Papers, Box 36, Folder 1, Schomburg Center.

69. Martin Kilson, "Memorandum on Situation of Negro Students at Harvard College," January 10, 1973, Guinier Papers, Box 36, Folder 2, Schomburg Center, emphasis in the original.

70. Derrick Bell, "Why Does Kilson Do It?" *Harvard Bulletin*, June 1973, Guinier Papers, Box 36, Folder 4, Schomburg Center.

71. Kilson, "Blacks at Harvard"; and "Admissions: Some Questions of Policy," *Harvard Bulletin*, June 1973.

72. Eddie Williams Jr., "Professor Kilson's Contentions: A Reply," *Harvard Bulletin*, June 1973.

73. Bell, "Why Does Kilson Do It?"

74. Derrick Bell, letter to *Harvard Crimson*, n.d., Guinier Papers, Box 45, Folder 4, Schomburg Center.

75. Ewart Guinier, "Draft Report on 1973–1974 Academic Year," Guinier Papers, Box 24, Folder 2, Schomburg Center.

76. *Harvard Crimson*, October 2, 1974, Guinier Papers, Box 33, Folder 8, Schomburg Center; Peter Kihss, "Black Studies Feud Erupts at Harvard," *New York Times*, March 10, 1975, 26.

77. "Black Studies at Harvard," *The Word*, January 1976, Guinier Papers, Box 45, Folder 4, Schomburg Center.

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80. Robert L. Allen, "Politics of the Attack on Black Studies," *Black Scholar* 6 (September 1974): 5.

81. "The Future of Black Studies in American Higher Education," *New York University Report*, February 12, 1975, IAAA Papers, Box 18, University Archives, New York University.

82. James McGinnis, "Towards a New Beginning: Crisis and Contradiction in Black Studies," *Black World*, March 1973.

83. Young, "The Struggle and Dream of Black Studies," 370.

84. Farah Jasmine Griffin, introduction [2006] to *Inclusive Scholarship: Developing Black Studies in the United States; A 25th Anniversary Retrospective of Ford Foundation Grant Making, 1982–2007* (New York: Ford Foundation, 2007), xiii.

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86. John Scanlon, "Seminar on Afro-American Studies," memorandum, August 5, 1970, Ford Foundation Papers, Grant 70–188, reel 1657, Ford Foundation, New York.

87. Vincent Harding to Edgar Toppin, July 1, 1970, Ford Foundation Papers, Grant 70–188, reel 1657.

88. "Some Concerns of the Black Caucus at the Aspen Black Studies Seminar," Ford Foundation Papers, Grant 70–188, reel 1657, Ford Foundation, New York; "Comments by Dr. Andrew Billingsley," Black Studies Seminar, July 19–25, 1970, Ford Foundation Papers, Grant 70–188, reel 1657.

89. "Remarks by James W. Armsey to the Seminar," Black Studies Seminar, July 19–25, 1970, Ford Foundation Papers, Grant 70–188, reel 1657.

90. Scanlon, "Seminar on Afro-American Studies."

91. Roscoe Brown reported that his department had to make do with 20–25 percent less money after the expiration of the Ford grant. *NYU Report*, February 12, 1975, IAAA Papers, Box 18, University Archives, New York University.

92. Farah Jasmine Griffin, "An Introduction to the Huggins Report," *Inclusive Scholarship*, 7–8. Scholars differ on the influence of the Ford Foundation on the development of Black studies. Noliwe Rooks argues that their preference for programs rather than departments had a decisive impact, while Fabio Rojas notes the relatively small early financial involvement of Ford, finding this insufficient to exert much long-range influence. See Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); and Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

93. St. Clair Drake, quoted in "Black Is . . . for Credit," *Newsweek*, October 20, 1969.

94. Charles Hamilton, "They Demand Relevance: Black Student Protest," (unpublished manuscript, 1968–1969), 104, in author's possession.

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97. Carlos Brossard, "Classifying Black Studies Programs," *Journal of Negro Education* 53, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 286; "Black Journals Reflect Shift from Racism," *New York Times*, April 27, 1975.

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109. See James E. Conyers, "The Association of Black Sociologists: A Descriptive Account from an Insider," *American Sociologist* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 49–55; and the Web site of the Association of Black Anthropologists, www.aaanet.org/sections/aba/htdocs/About2.html, accessed July 28, 2011.



Canon, Institutionalization, Identity

Contradictions for Asian American Studies

LISA LOWE

In our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are . . . destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanised caravans.

—T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards a Definition of Culture* (1949)

Mrs. Hammerick . . . Boiling Spring Elementary School . . . I was scared of her like no dark corners could ever scare me. You have to know that all the while she was teaching us history . . . she was telling all the boys in our class that I was Pearl and my last name was Harbor. They understood her like she was speaking French and their names were all Claude and Pierre. I felt it in the lower half of my stomach, and it throbbed and throbbed. . . .

—Monique Thuy-Dung Truong, “Kelly,” *Amerasia Journal* (1991)

Approaching the question of Asian American Studies, I pose T. S. Eliot’s 1949 lament that democratized education places the “ancient edifice” of Western culture at risk from the encroachments of non-Western cultures and the mass culture of industrialized society (“barbarian nomads in their mechanised caravans”) against the classroom evoked in Monique Thuy-Dung Truong’s 1991 Vietnamese American short story “Kelly” in order to ground my discussion in two fundamental relationships. First, the juxtaposition of Eliot and Truong renders explicit a relationship between the culturalist narrative that valorizes Western culture as a separate sphere and the materially, racially, and sexually differentiated society which that notion of

autonomous culture is constructed against, and whose contradictions it works to conceal. Second, I hope it may reinscribe a connection between the developmental narrative that privileges the elite subject of a "prior" Western civilization and the voiceless invisibility imposed upon students of color in the classroom produced by that narrative. My essay explores the question of Asian American literature as an expression of the contradictions implied by these two relationships and considers the importance of Asian American Studies, as one form of interdisciplinary cultural studies, as an oppositional site from which to contest the educational apparatus that reproduces, and continues to be organized by, both the culturalist and the developmental narratives. Elsewhere I have interrogated the production of ethnic identity by dominant institutions and within the discourse of Asian American cultural politics, and suggested that there are important contradictions between a cultural nationalist construction of identity and the different registers of Asian American heterogeneity (particularly class, gender, and national origin differences among Asians in the United States).¹ In this present discussion, I wish to continue this critical engagement with the notion of identity by focusing especially on questions of the literary canon, pedagogy, and the formation of the subject.

We need not look far to find residues of Eliot's distress over Western cultural "disintegration" within contemporary American discourse about education; William Bennett, Lynne Cheney, Allan Bloom, Dinesh D'Souza, and others have all contributed to this concerted lament. Yet it is evident that these attempts to maintain a fixed, autonomous notion of Western culture belie precisely the material strata and social differentiations for which this notion has traditionally functioned as a resolution; as Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton have pointed out, the rise of modern humanities in the eighteenth century and their institutionalization in the nineteenth century were themselves directly related to the rise of the Western bourgeoisie, who won its battle with the old aristocracy by redefining the liberal subject in the context of competition by free agents in the marketplace.² In the last half of the twentieth century in the United States, industrialized society's need for a trained yet stratified labor force, the civil rights movement, as well as demographic increases in racial, ethnic, and immigrant populations, have made it all the more difficult for contemporary discourse about education, both liberal and neoconservative, to ignore, as Eliot's nostalgia for "a more articulated society" did, the mandate for the democratization and diversification of the modern educational apparatus. In this sense, the neoconservative educational agenda, as Henry Giroux and Peter McClaren have ob-

served, operates through two platforms: on the one hand, through the advocacy of “cultural unification” demanding a recanonization of Western classics, and on the other, through an expansion (at the expense of humanities or social science research) of a technicist or vocationalist curriculum that blames the demise of U.S. economic hegemony on the failure of education to adequately train competitive professional and technical classes.³ The liberal discourse on education has challenged this reformulation of unified Western culture by advocating a diversification of the humanities curriculum and urging an integration of the university through student and faculty affirmative action. Yet to the degree that liberal challenges have remained wedded to a culturalist paradigm (however “multiculturalist”) that tends still to isolate culture from material relations, they have yet to adequately disrupt the neoconservative management of the function of university education. The university continues to be organized by means of a bifurcated conception that protects Western cultural study as a largely autonomous domain while “democratizing” the institution only to the extent that it addresses the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous student population through the development of business, engineering, technical, and other professionalizing programs. The result is a contradiction in which “culture” remains canonical in the traditional Western European sense while the educational system (claiming a “multicultural” conscience) serves to socialize and incorporate students from other backgrounds into the capitalist market economy. In Martin Carnoy’s analysis, the contradiction that brings new social groups into the educational system for vocationalization while continuing to universalize a closed, autonomous notion of culture precisely implies “an exploitable political space for those that are willing to engage in the struggle for change.”⁴

In contemporary universities, this contradiction is visibly animated in the emergence of interdisciplinary fields such as Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, Third World Studies, and Cultural Studies. Interdisciplinary studies express contradiction—or, in Carnoy’s phrase, “exploitable political space”—to the degree that they provide the sites from which to reevaluate disciplinary methods that assume modern Western cultural autonomy and the universality of the Western subject. Interdisciplinary studies disrupt the narratives of traditional disciplines that have historically subordinated the concerns of non-Western, racial and ethnic minority peoples, and women, to the degree that they hold the potential to transform disciplinary divisions that guarantee the self-evidence of these narratives. In Women’s Studies, for example, work by and about women of color—for example, the very

different theoretical work of Norma Alarcón, Kimberle Crenshaw, Trinh T. Minh-ha, or Evelyn Nakano Glenn⁵—illustrates this interdisciplinarity to the degree that this work makes use of a varied constellation of critical apparatuses that refuses univocality, totalization, and scholarly indifference; this work redefines the traditional separations of subject and object; it persistently argues for the inseparability of the nonequivalent determinations of race, class, and gender. However, to the extent that the institution pressures interdisciplinary studies to formalize and legitimate themselves in terms of established criteria, interdisciplinary programs and departments have needed to be vigilant in relation to institutionalization.

In this sense, Ethnic Studies scholars do not reproduce methods of literary or historical studies in order to merely celebrate “ethnic culture” as an object separated from the material conditions of production and reception; they theorize, in a critical, dialectical manner, the relationship between cultural artifacts and the social groupings by which they are produced and which they, in turn, help to produce.⁶ At the same time, institutionalizing fields like Ethnic Studies still contains an inevitable paradox: on the one hand, institutionalization provides a material base within the university for a transformative critique of traditional disciplines and their traditional separations; yet, on the other hand, the institutionalization of any field or curriculum that establishes orthodox objects and methods submits in part to the demands of the university and its educative function of socializing subjects into the state. Although institutionalizing interdisciplinary study risks integrating it into a system that threatens to appropriate what is most critical and oppositional about that study, the logic through which the university incorporates areas of interdisciplinarity simultaneously provides for the possibility that these sites will remain oppositional forums, productively antagonistic to notions of autonomous culture and disciplinary regulation, and to the interpellation of students as univocal subjects. In terms of Asian American Studies, the way in which we approach questions of reading texts, constituting objects of study, and teaching students can determine the extent to which Ethnic Studies serves the traditional function of the university, and the extent to which it provides for a continuing and persistent site from which to educate students to be actively critical of that traditional function.

One manner by which Asian American Studies’ interdisciplinarity and self-determination may be incorporated into the university is through a particular deployment of a brand of “multiculturalism,” which must be clearly distinguished from panethnic and panracial coalitions of students

and faculty that demand further transformations of the university.⁷ Exploiting the notion of “multiculturalism,” the university can refer to the study of ethnic cultures in its claim to be an institution to which all racial and ethnic minority groups have equal access and in which all are represented, while masking the degree to which the larger institution still fails to address the needs of populations of color. For example, though many universities have begun to reappraise their curricula in the humanities, adding texts by non-Western or female authors to Western civilization courses, there are fewer Black students attending college today than in 1975. A multiculturalist agenda may thematize the pressures that demographic increases of immigrant, racial, and ethnic populations bring to the educational sphere, but these pressures are registered only partially and inadequately when the studies of ethnic traditions are, on an intellectual level, assimilated as analogues of Western European traditions or exoticized as primitive and less “developed,” and, on an institutional level, tokenized as examples of the university’s commitment to “diversity” while being marginalized through underfunding. Such pluralist multiculturalism may be, for the contemporary period, a central arena for what Gramsci called “hegemony,” the process by which a ruling group gains “consent” of its constituents to determine the cultural, ideological, and political character of a state. The terrain of multiculturalism is marked by the incorporative process by which a ruling group elicits the “consent” of racial, ethnic, or class minority groups through the promise of equal participation and representation; but to the extent that multiculturalism—as a discourse designed to recuperate conflict and difference through inclusion—is itself the index of crisis in a specific dominant formation, the terrain of multiculturalism also provides for the activities of racial, class, and sexual minority groups who organize and contest that domination. Within this context, we can appreciate the evident importance of self-determined “subaltern” interventions by groups that both distinguish themselves from liberal multiculturalism and do not exclusively reproduce pluralist arguments of inclusion and rights.⁸

The establishment of a canon of Asian American literature is one part of a project of institutional change within which ethnic Americans as social subjects articulate an educational space within the university and constitute literary objects as expressions of a distinct, self-determining ethnic culture, and through which the notion of the “subject” interpellated by the university is altered and revised in light of the heterogeneous social formations of racial, ethnic, and immigrant minority subjects. Yet, paradoxically, accord-

ing to the contradiction that I have just outlined, the definition of an ethnic literature, figured by an ethnic canon, may compromise the critical project of institutional change if it is forced to subscribe to criteria defined by the majority canon in order to establish the formal unity of a literary tradition; for it is precisely the standard of a literary canon that the Eurocentric and professionalizing university demands of Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic minority cultures so as to formalize those cultures as “developed” traditions. In drawing a distinction between “major” and “minor” literatures, David Lloyd has argued that the Anglo-European function of canonization is to unify aesthetic culture as a domain in which material stratifications and differences are reconciled. A “major” literary canon traditionally performs that reconciliation by means of a selection of works that uphold a narrative of ethical formation in which the individual relinquishes particular differences through an identification with a universalized form of subjectivity; a “minor” literature may conform to the criteria of the “major” canon, or it may interrupt the function of reconciliation by challenging the concepts of identity and identification and by voicing antagonisms to the universalizing narrative of development.⁹

In response to the demand that Asian American literature function as a supplement or corollary to the “major” tradition of Anglo-American literature, Asian American literary texts often reveal heterogeneity rather than producing regulating ideas of cultural unity or integration. On one level, this heterogeneity is expressed in the unfixed, unclosed field of texts written by authors at different distances and generations from the “original” Asian culture—cultures as different as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Philippine, Indian, Vietnamese, Lao—or, as in the case of Hawaiian and Pacific Islander cultures, who are not *immigrants* at all, but colonized, dispossessed, deracinated.¹⁰ The Asian American constituency is composed of men and women of exclusively Asian parents and of mixed race, refugee and nonrefugee, English and non-English-speaking, of urban, rural, and different class backgrounds, heterosexual as well as gay and lesbian. For this reason, even when anthologies have selected literary works to represent the tradition (e.g., *Aiiieeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* [1975], or the more recent *Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* [1989], and *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian American Plays* [1990], editors have clearly defined their works as products of particular moments of Asian American cultural definition and thematized the possibility of shifts, revisions, and different formations in order to account for the heterogeneous and uneven development of the various groups that make up the Asian

American community.¹¹ For example, Tsutakawa warns that “no one should think of [*The Forbidden Stitch*] as the single definitive text. . . . this is not a book with a shelf life of forever” (14). On another level, Asian American literature expresses heterogeneity not merely in the constituency it is construed to “represent” but in the manners by which it puts into relief the material conditions of production. Indeed, the study of Asian American literature has been historically an endeavor committed to a consideration of the work in terms of its material contexts of production and reception. For this reason, Elaine Kim’s immeasurably important first critical study, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982), emphasizes “how the literature elucidates the social history of Asians in the United States” rather than exclusively focusing on its “formal literary merit.”¹² Kim makes clear that her decision to interrogate Asian American literature as an expression of social context is not because of the literature’s lack of stylistic or rhetorical complexity but rather the way in which the literature itself captures a “movement between social history and literature.” Asian American literature *resists* the formal abstraction of aestheticization and canonization. If we evaluate Asian American literary expression in canonical terms, it reveals itself as an aesthetic product that cannot repress the material inequalities of its conditions of production; its aesthetic is not defined by sublimation but rather by contradiction, such that discontent, nonequivalence, and irresolution call into question the project of abstracting the aesthetic as a separate domain of unification and reconciliation. It is a literature that, if subjected to a canonical function, dialectically returns a critique of that function.

In this sense, just as the conception of an Asian American canon animates a contradiction between an institutional demand for assimilation to major criteria and the inassimilable alterity of ethnic differences, so too do Asian American works themselves precisely underscore the tension between unifying cultural narratives and heterogeneous, intersecting formations of ethnic immigrant subjects that are antagonistic to those narratives. Considering one of the core works of Asian American literature, for example, Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* (1943), we observe that on one level the novel may be read as an Asian-American version of the form of the bildungsroman, or novel of formation, to the degree that it narrates the protagonist’s development from the uncertainty, locality, and impotence of “youth” to the definition, mobility, and potency of “maturity.” At the same time, to the degree that the narrative captures the complex, unsynthetic constitution of the immigrant subject between an already twice-

colonized Philippine culture on the one hand, and the pressure to conform to Anglo-American society on the other, it troubles the closure and reconciliation of the bildungsroman form. If the novel is read as either a narrative of immigrant assimilation or even as a narrative of successful self-definition (the hero leaves the poverty and lack of opportunity of the Philippines to become a laborer in the United States; he achieves a state of self-consciousness that allows him to become a journalist and to author his autobiography), both characterizations privilege a telos of development that closes off the most interesting conflicts and indeterminacies in the text. In addition, reading the novel as an analogue of the European novel subordinates Asian American culture in several significant ways: not only does the form itself structurally imply an integration and submission of individual particularity to a universalized social norm (which, in the case of the Asian American novel, is racial or ethnic difference coded as anterior to, less than, Western civilization), but in privileging a nineteenth-century European genre as the model to be approximated, Asian American literature is cast as imitation, mimicry, the underdeveloped Other. For these reasons, we attend instead to the ways in which a novel like *America Is in the Heart* does not comply with the notion of a unified aesthetic form, and how the concepts of development, synthesis, and identity are themselves challenged in the text. Taught as an ethnic bildungsroman, as a tale of the subject's journey from foreign estrangement to integrated citizenship, the novel responds to the reconciliatory and universalizing functions of canonization; taught with attention to social and historical, as well as formal and thematic, contradictions, the novel may eloquently thematize how the demand for canonization simultaneously produces a critique of canonization itself.

Bulosan's novel portrays its hero as highly seduced by the notion of individual freedom through education. The narrative that begins in the Philippines, where the hero's family sacrifices greatly to send its oldest son Macario to school, figures both English literacy and American education as paths to freedom and self-development, particularly in the myths of Robinson Crusoe and Abraham Lincoln. However, once in the United States, the hero, Carlos, does not have access to formal schooling and is forced to teach himself; that he creates his own curriculum out of the fragments of books and resources available to him reveals the disjunction between the promise of education and the unequal access of different racial and economic groups to that education. From the outset, the protagonist's literary education is a disrupted, partial, and fragmentary one. Moreover, his "education" is equally informed by his observations of the exploitation,

violence, marginality, and incarcerations suffered by Philippine immigrants to the United States, which further challenge his belief in the promise of American democracy. This is explicitly thematized when the narrator ponders the paradox of America: "Why was America so kind and yet so cruel? Was there no way to simplify things in this continent so that suffering would be minimized? Was there no common denominator on which we could all meet? I was angry and confused and wondered if I would ever understand this paradox."¹³ When he suggests that there is a "common denominator on which we could all meet," the narrator poses his questions within the adopted language of democratic pluralism, a language that pronounces a faith in the promise of equal opportunity and inclusion. However, it is precisely this notion of common denominator that the narrator comes to understand as contradictory and riddled with exceptions, strata, and exclusions when he later quotes his brother Macario at length:

America is a prophecy of a new society of men: of a system that knows no sorrow or strife or suffering. . . . America is also the nameless foreigner, the homeless refugee, the hungry boy begging for a job and the black body dangling on a tree. America is the illiterate immigrant who is ashamed that the world of books and intellectual opportunities is closed to him. We are all that nameless foreigner, that homeless refugee, that hungry boy, that illiterate immigrant and that lynched black body. All of us, from the first Adams to the last Filipino, native born or alien, educated or illiterate—*We are America!* (188–89)

In this later meditation, two starkly different visions of "America" are posed against one another—the national fiction of democratic nation-state without sorrow or suffering, and a nation in which members of that national body barely survive owing to exclusion from that nation-state. The "America" that is "in the heart" is a stratified, contradictory figure divided between the named promise of democracy and the unnamed refugees, immigrants, and victims of violence who live beneath that promise. In this sense, the proclamation "We are America!" does not represent an identification of the immigrant subject with the national fiction of inclusion but rather contests that identification by inserting a heterogeneous "we"—"that nameless foreigner, that homeless refugee, that hungry boy, that illiterate immigrant and that lynched black body"—into the concept of polity; this insertion introduces antinomy into the promise of synthesis, displaces unity with antagonism, and renders visible the political differentiation and disenfranchisement prematurely resolved by a fiction of reconciliation. The narrative of *America Is in the Heart* is punctuated throughout by the continual migration of Filipino work crews, moving from job to job up and down the west-

ern United States, and the novel closes with a description of the narrator departing again with another crew en route to Portland. From the window of the bus he observes a group of workers in the fields: "I wanted to shout good-by to the Filipino pea pickers. . . . How many times in the past had I done just that?" (326). The novel ends with the repetition of yet another departure and relocation, framed as symptomatic of a continuing inequality between powerful agribusiness capital and immigrant labor, rather than with settlement, permanence, or resolution. It is an uneven, divided notion of America that concludes the novel, rather than a naturalized unification of those unevennesses and divisions. In this sense, *America Is in the Heart* does not "develop" the narrating subject's identification with a uniform American nation; rather, the achievement of narrative voice is precisely the effect of the subject's critical estrangement from, and dissymmetrical relationship to, American culturalist, economic, and nationalist formations.

The manner in which Asian American literature refuses the premature reconciliation of Asian immigrant particularity is also illustrated in a consideration of a variety of novels portraying the internment and relocation of first- and second-generation Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II. Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953), John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1982) represent different narrative treatments of the nisei during and following the internment, who were forced either to identify with the Japanese state and be named enemies of the United States and Canada or to assimilate unquestioningly into American or Canadian culture and repudiate any Japanese cultural affiliation. This impossibly binary demand, encountered in different ways by the Japanese North Americans in all three novels, is not dissimilar to the predicament of many racial and ethnic minority peoples who face disenfranchisement unless they abandon their particular cultures to assimilate as citizens of a common culture; yet for Japanese American and Japanese Canadian men and women this process was coercively enforced through physical detention in the camps, and in addition, for nisei men, through the demand that they prove their patriotism by enlisting in the armed services to fight against Japan. In portraying the effects of the internment on the nisei subject, none of the novels delivers an undivided, assimilated subject who comes to identify with the American or Canadian citizenry; all three narratives refuse, in different ways, to develop, reconcile, and resolve.

Of the three novels, Sone's *Nisei Daughter* is formally the most conventional—a semiautobiographical first-person narrative that proceeds linearly from a girlhood in the Seattle Japanese community through and be-

yond the events of the internment—and ends by pronouncing that “the Japanese and American parts of me were now blended into one.”¹⁴ However, owing to *Nisei Daughter*’s depiction of anti-Japanese racism, employment segregations, immigration restrictions, and ultimately the internment, the blending of “Japanese” and “American” is not conceived of except in terms of the larger structure of unequal power within which Japanese Americans are subordinated by the U.S. government. Throughout the novel, many scenes dramatize the nonequivalent force of Japanese and American cultures on the *nisei*, and this nonequivalence contextualizes the final statement of “blending” as a rhetorical response to the demand that the *nisei* resolve their identity by assimilating as American citizens; considering the larger narrative, we can read for the “false ring” of the ending, and call its premature resolution into question. Although the *nisei* child rebels against the normalizing expectations of both Japanese and American socializations, the Japanese customs are encouraged by parents and family friends, whereas the representative agents of American ways are armed policemen who, in one episode, storm into the Itoi home to arrest Kazuko’s father on false charges of which he is later cleared. Thus, midway through the novel when the Itoi family is interned, this nonequivalence becomes even more explicit, and the narrative turns into a concerted critique of the suppression of Japanese and Japanese Americans by the U.S. government. After a family friend has been abducted by the FBI, the Itois are warned that they must destroy everything and anything Japanese that may incriminate them, yet Kazuko cannot bring herself to destroy all the Japanese items in their home:

I gathered together my well-worn Japanese language schoolbooks which I had been saving over a period of ten years with the thought that they might come in handy when I wanted to teach Japanese to my own children. I threw them into the fire and watched them flame and shrivel into black ashes. But when I came face to face with my Japanese doll which Grandmother Nagashima had sent me from Japan, I rebelled. (155)

The destruction of Japanese language books described in this passage emblemizes the ways in which Japanese Americans were forced to internalize the negation of Japanese culture, and to assimilate into Anglo-American majority culture during World War II. Kazuko’s refusal to destroy all Japanese items is reiterated at other moments in the novel in which she expresses defiant anger at the treatment of the Japanese—for example, in the rage she feels while looking at the barrel of the soldier’s gun pointed toward internees boarding a bus (170). These moments, which underscore the subordina-

tion of Japanese Americans to the American state, render the final “blending” of two equal parts a provisional response to both social and canonical demands for resolution. Rather than a final synthesis that denies the damage of the internment, or reconciles the Japanese American subject divided by the “enemy/not enemy” logic of the state, we can read the declaration of Japanese and American “blending” as a manner of naming a continuing project of suspicion and survival as the nisei subject narrates the violence of a system that demands assimilation through internment, obligatory patriotism, and military service.

The suspicion beneath the premature reconciliation of *Nisei Daughter* is thrown even further into relief when Sone’s text is considered in conjunction with Okada’s *No-No Boy*, a novel of discontent in which the Japanese American protagonist angrily refuses adjustment to his postinternment and postimprisonment circumstances, and Kogawa’s *Obasan*, a weave of personal, familial, and historical memory whose formal modernism suggests the recomposition of fragments, rather than a unified development, as the narrative expression of the relocated Japanese Canadian subject.¹⁵ Virtually ignored when it was published in 1957, and rejected for its uncompromisingly unconventional style, Okada’s *No-No Boy* was reissued in 1976 after an excerpt from it was featured in the anthology *Aiiieeee! No-No Boy* may be characterized as a realist narrative to the extent that its action proceeds chronologically; but it is *antidevelopmental* in the sense that its condensed, almost static portrait takes place within a small period of several weeks, and it repeatedly undermines uniperspectivalism by alternating inconsistently between a third-person omniscient narration and despairing, angry, or confused interior monologues. The narrative shifts back and forth between different voices within long, run-on sentences, conveying the confusion and entropy of the protagonist Ichiro upon his return to Seattle after two years of internment and two subsequent years in prison for refusing to serve in the U.S. Army, and documents his bitter confusion, isolation, and shame as he confronts nisei soldiers and veterans, nisei women, white Americans, his parents and other Japanese issei. Ichiro is a deeply divided subject, antagonistic to both the American government that interned and imprisoned Japanese Americans and to Japanese patriots like his mother who feverishly deny Japan’s defeat in the war; in effect, the “no-no boy” not only refuses loyalty to either Japan or the United States but he refuses the “enemy/not enemy” logic of the choice itself. Just as Ichiro’s “no” dramatizes the Asian American subject’s refusal to accept the dividing, subordinating terms of assimilation, so the novel’s stasis, fragmentation, and dis-

content refuse the development, synthesis, and reconciliation required by traditional canonical criteria.

Formally more complex than either *Nisei Daughter* or *No-No Boy*, Kogawa's *Obasan* makes use of different narrative and dramatic techniques to portray the splitting, silencing, and irresolution of the Japanese Canadian subject. The novel's opening places the narrator in 1972, three decades after the internment and relocation of the Japanese Canadians; the text weaves back and forth between different time periods, making use of private memory, dreams, diaries, letters, and documented history in order to dramatize the narrator's project of reconstructing the events that led to the loss of her mother, father, and grandparents, and the fragmented dispersal of other family and community during the relocation and internment years. Yet the task of recomposing history out of silence and fragmentation require the narrator to first recount her childhood sexual abuse by a neighbor, which has become conflated with the confiscation of property and the dislocation of internment, as well as the separation from her mother, who left for Japan the same year. Throughout the course of the novel, she must reach back to confront and bear the deaths of her uncle, father, grandfather, and grandmother, and ultimately to piece together the details of her mother's anguished suffering in the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. The violences to the narrator and her family, figured throughout *Obasan* in metaphors of abuse, silence, darkness, and disease, cannot be lightened or healed; they can only be revealed, narrated, and reconfigured.¹⁶ Out of the subject's fragmentation there emerges not a unified wholeness, but a re-composed fragmentation. In this sense, all three novels are antagonistic to the reconciliation of Asian American particularity within a narrative of development, as much as the formal differences among the three works further signify the discontinuous, heterogeneous range of Asian American representations.

Other Asian American texts disrupt even more dramatically the narrative that incorporates the immigrant subject into a national or cultural uniformity. For example, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982) is a Korean American text that refuses to provide either a linear, unified development of the writing subject or an aesthetic synthesis or ethical resolution at the text's conclusion.¹⁷ In combining autobiographical and biographical fragments, photographs, historical narrative, calligraphy, and lyric and prose poems in a complex multilingual piece, *Dictée* blurs conventions of genre and narrative authority, troubling the formal categories upon which canonization depends. Furthermore, *Dictée* challenges the notion of a discrete typology of

"Asian American experience," for it evokes a Korean American subject who is not only the product of multiple determinations—gender, language, religion—but who bears the traces of differentiated layers of colonial and imperial dominations as well. The text juxtaposes a series of disparate episodes that alternately depict subjects incompletely formed within specific linguistic and historical circumstances. For example, the first section thematizes the use of dictation and recitation in the conversion of the student into a faithful French Catholic subject; the section "Clio" alludes to the disciplining of the Korean as colonial subject during the period of Japanese occupation (1910–45); in "Melpomene," the narrator describes the incorporation of the individual into South Korean nationalism during the Korean War (1950–53); and in "Calliope," written from the standpoint of a Korean American returning to South Korea, the narrator recalls her naturalization as an immigrant into American citizenship. The series of unfinished subject formations—illustrating the female student's antagonism to the educational and religious apparatuses, the colonized subject's disloyalty to the empire, and the immigrant's incomplete incorporation into the state—suggests not only that subjectivity is multiply determined, but also that each determination is uneven and historically differentiated, with no single one monolithically defining the subject. In this sense, *Dictée* dramatizes that each interpellation organizes the female/colonized/postcolonial/ethnic subject irregularly and incompletely, leaving a variety of residues that remain uncontained by, and antagonistic to, the educational, religious, colonial, and imperial apparatuses of domination and assimilation. If one function of canonization is the resolution of material contradiction through a narrative of formation in which differences—of gender, race, nationality, or sexuality—are subsumed through the individual's identification with a universalized form, *Dictée* is a text that continually disrupts such identifications. While rendering unavoidably explicit the traces of colonial and imperial damage and dislocation on the subject, it articulates a voice in opposition to those dominations that persistently refuses the assimilation of that subject to fictions of identity and development, and writes this subject as a possible site for active cultural and ideological struggle.

Another important manner in which Asian American literature defies canonization is that it is a literature that is still being written—an unclosed, unfixed body of work whose centers and orthodoxies shift as the makeup of the Asian-origin constituency shifts, and within which new voices are continually being articulated. The diversity of contemporary interventions is evident, for example, in a recent collection of writing by younger Asian/

Pacific authors, "Burning Cane," which includes writings by Asian American gays and lesbians, by mixed-race Asian Americans, and by a variety of Southeast Asian-American writers.¹⁸ While "Burning Cane" is unified by a common project of articulating cultural resistance, the heterogeneous selection of pieces suggests that, owing to the increasingly various Asian American constituency, the profile of traits that characterize Asian American "identity" is as much in flux as is the orthodoxy regarding which constituencies comprise and define Asian American "culture." First-generation post-1975 Southeast Asian writing introduces new themes to, and emphasizes different concerns than, the existing body of multigenerational Asian American literature; for example, some of the pieces by newer immigrants in "Burning Cane" focus on deracination and displacement, rather than on struggles against incorporation or assimilation. In T. C. Huo's short fiction "The Song Sent Across the Mekong," the narrator meditates on the image of a man singing to a woman left behind on the riverbank as a paradigmatic figure for leaving, separation from family, and loss of homeland; while the narrator identifies with the man who has left, his mourning consists of different attempts at narrating the woman's position, reconstructing her thoughts and actions, imagining her dead and alive. Huynh-Nhu Le's poem "Hearts & Minds" expresses a similar grief through a simple yet poignant chiasmus in which Vietnam, the poet's birthplace, is alien and unknown while the new land of the United States is overly familiar, yet unwelcoming: "Vietnam: / A land I know not much, / A water I did not swim, / A mountain I did not climb . . . America: / A land I know quite well, / A river I might have drowned, / A mountain I have fallen" (98). Other stories in this collection broaden the spectrum of Asian American writing by depicting Asian American subjects as formed by a multiplicity of intersecting and conflicting determinations—gender, generation, sexuality, national origin, and economic class, as well as race and ethnicity; some explore the tensions and connections between subjects of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The narrator of Patrick Leong's story "Graveyard Picnics" is a Chinese/Mexican American who, attending the gravesite of his Chinese grandfather, ponders whether he ought to worship the dead in the traditional Chinese ceremony led by his father or pray for them in church according to the Catholic traditions of his maternal family; inheriting aspects of different cultural systems, yet belonging wholly to neither, the narrator finds himself located as a "hinge" between two separate but interlocking ethnic cultures. Wynn Young's "Poor Butterfly!" is narrated by a bitterly ironic young Asian American gay man as he considers the fetishism of

white gays who prefer Asian men, and as he worries about being endangered by his partner's uncurbed sexual activity. A collection like "Burning Cane" opens up the definitions of what constitutes Asian American writing—by drawing attention to recent immigrant writing and by featuring pieces that explore the intersecting complex of determinations that characterize the Asian American subject.

By way of conclusion, I wish to return to the story by Monique Thuy-Dung Truong with which this discussion began, and which appears in "Burning Cane." The narrator is a Vietnamese American woman who recalls her elementary school education in a predominantly white town in North Carolina during the 1970s. Let us consider again the initial passage:

Mrs. Hammerick . . . I was scared of her like no dark corners could ever scare me. You have to know that all the while she was teaching us history . . . she was telling all the boys in our class that I was Pearl and my last name was Harbor. They understood her like she was speaking French and their names were all Claude and Pierre. I felt it in the lower half of my stomach, and it throbbed and throbbed. . . . It would be so many years . . . before I would understand that Pearl Harbor was not just in 1941 but in 1975.¹⁹

Truong's story portrays the simultaneous indictment and silencing of the young Asian immigrant student within the classroom regulated by an American nationalist projection of the Asian as *enemy*; a binary logic of patriot and enemy invigorates American nationalism during the Vietnam War period, gathering more force through a conflation of the North Vietnamese and the Japanese that naturalizes American neocolonialism in Vietnam through the appeal to a nationalist historical narrative about World War II. The narrator's observation that the teacher's history lesson addresses "all the boys" further instantiates how the American nationalist narrative recognizes, recruits, and incorporates male subjects, while "feminizing," and silencing, the students who do not conform to that notion of patriotic subjectivity. But at the same time, Truong's story is an epistolary fiction addressed to one of the narrator's few friends within that classroom, a white female student named Kelly. Although the classroom is remembered as a site of pain, the retrospective renarration of that pain, not as individually suffered but as a shared topos between writer and addressee, is, in contrast, a source of new pleasure and a differently discovered sense of community. The narrator writes: "I guess it was Mrs. Hammerick's books that brought you and me together. I think you and I would have had to find each other anyway, but I like to tell our story this way, you know, like it was destiny and

not necessity. . . . You and I were library kids, do you remember that?" The repetition of "you and me" and "you and I" sutures, on the narrative level, the intersubjective relationality between the narrator and Kelly. As the story proceeds, it delicately portrays relationships that cross boundaries of race, class, and constructions of femininity; girls are thrown into tentative but sympathetic intimacies based on their quite different exclusions—the narrator is ostracized as a Vietnamese immigrant, her friend Kelly because she is overweight, and another girl, Michelle, because of her family's poverty. The girls' friendships are marked by distinct yet overlapping dynamics of power and powerlessness; yet in response they form courageous bridges across distinct lines of opportunity and restriction.

Truong's story yields several points with which I wish to end this discussion of Asian American literature and the university. First, by focusing on the classroom as the place where the narrator's difference is most sharply delineated, the story emphasizes that education is a primary site through which the narratives of national group identity are established and reproduced, and dramatizes that the construction of others—as *enemies*—is fundamental logic in the constitution of national identity. Second, it is suggestive about the process through which the students' conformity to those narratives is demanded and regulated: the historical narrative about victors and enemies elicits an identification of the student with that victorious national body; in that process of identification, the student consents to his incorporation as a subject of the American state. I refer to this subject of ideology in the classroom as a "he," for just as in Truong's story, where the history lesson is addressed to "all the boys," I would argue that the subject position of the American student/citizen is coded and narrated as a masculine position. We might say that the American nationalist narrative of citizenship incorporates the subject as male citizen according to a relationship that is not dissimilar to the family's oedipalization, or socialization, of the son; in terms of the racial or ethnic subject, he becomes a citizen when he identifies with the paternal state, and accepts the terms of this identification by subordinating his racial difference, and denying his identification with the feminized "motherland."

Third, by representing this classroom from the perspective of the immigrant female student, the story underscores how this identification requires the painful suppression of differences. In terms of group formation, it calls attention to how curricula that universalize the values and norms of a "common" national culture are in contradiction with a society that is materially divided and stratified in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and na-

tional origin; in terms of individual subject formation, it suggests that the interpellation of the individual splits the subject off from itself, suppressing those material, racial, sexual aspects that are in contradiction with, in excess of, that generic subject formation.²⁰ But this interpellation/oedipalization is not univocal or total; for even though aspects may be conditionally split off, the subject may be insufficiently captured by the nationalist subject formation such that antagonisms arise against that formation out of the contradiction of interpellation itself. In using the term contradiction to conceive of both group and individual identities, I mean to take up the sense in which contradiction describes how a system, in the course of providing for its effective hegemony, produces the conflicts that will bring about its own expiration and undoing. One of the conditions of the contradiction of nationalist identity formation is that it is precisely the demand for national cultural uniformity that inflects differences with oppositional significance in antagonism to the apparatuses whose function it is to dictate that uniformity; in other words, the dominant construction of American nationalist identity logically provides for the critiques of that identity from the standpoints of groups racialized, sexualized, or classed as *other*. Another condition of contradiction is of course that none of these valences of otherness is independently articulated; throughout lived social relations, race is class-inflected, sexuality is racialized, labor is gendered; there is no contradiction that is not articulated with other contradictions, and society is increasingly characterized by intersections in which racial, gendered, and economic contradictions are inseparable and mobilized by means of and through one another.

In this regard, the final point I would like to draw out of Truong's story is that by focusing on the friendships among three differently marginalized female students, the story ultimately allegorizes a network of alliance across lines of race, class, and gender that is not only a means of surviving the classroom, but is also the basis of contesting the historically differentiated but intersecting determinations of racist colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism, for which that classroom is a primary locus of reproduction. Sites that express overdetermination, or the convergence of a complex of contradictions, may function either in the direction of an inhibition and neutralizing of contradictory possibility or in the direction of a rupture, a mobilization of contradictions within which the coincidence of racial, gender, and class determinations would bring forward a disruption of the multiply articulated structure of domination. The concerted articulation of converged contradiction "fuses" what Althusser calls a "ruptural unity" that makes

possible the emergence of different subjects and constituencies in a “grouped assault” on a specific hegemony, or a specific dominant formation.²¹ We may recall that Gramsci writes of hegemony as not simply a political rule but as a process within which any specific dominant configuration exists always within the context of contesting pressures from other sites, classes, and groups in different conditions of self-identification and formation.²² Put otherwise, the overdetermination of class, race, and gender contradictions in the construction of American nationalist identity makes possible the continuation of painful silences and exclusions in the American classroom, but this convergence of contradictions may also precisely constitute the ground from which antiracist, feminist, and class struggles against those nationalist dominations necessarily emerge.

I want to cast the project of teaching U.S. minority, postcolonial, and women’s literatures in the contemporary university as something like the network of alliances described in Truong’s story, as a collection of linked alternative pedagogies central to contesting how the educational apparatus traditionally functions to incorporate students as subjects of the state, as well as contesting the narratives through which that socialization takes place. Like the affinities in Truong’s story, it is a set of links that is not predicated on notions of similarity or identity, but is a project built out of material, historical, and topical differentiation. Allow me to point out, too, that Truong’s story is precisely a U.S. minority, a postcolonial, *and* a woman’s text; it is an object that dissolves the notion that these three areas can be conceived as discrete or discontinuous. Through concerted pedagogical and curricular changes taking place in different institutional sites, we can locate and displace the powerful ideological narratives that traditionally structure the current university (that is, the two with which we began, the culturalist one that projects Euro-American culture as an autonomous domain, and the developmental narrative that abstracts and privileges the subject of that “prior” Western civilization, and defines that subject against others who are identified with less autonomous, less developed, disintegrated and disintegrating contemporary cultures). The teaching of racial, ethnic, and postcolonial texts decenters the autonomous notion of Western culture by recentering the complexities of racial, ethnic, and postcolonial collectivities, and unmasks the developmental narrative as a fiction designed to justify the histories of colonialism, neocolonialism, and forced labor and to erase the dislocations and hybridities that are the resulting conditions of those histories. Through these pedagogical and curricular shifts, we may also be able to alter the ways in which students are interpellated as

subjects by the educational apparatus, opening the possibility that the university will ultimately offer to students more than a single universalized subject formation, more than an incorporation into a uniform national or cultural identity, and more sites and practices than those permitted by one generic subject position.

Notes

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1. Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," *Diaspora* 1 (spring 1990): 24–44.

2. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton, eds. and introduction, "Theory Pedagogy Politics: The Crisis of 'The Subject' in the Humanities," *Theory Pedagogy Politics: Texts for Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 1.

3. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McClaren, eds., *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), "Introduction."

4. Martin Carnoy, "Education, State and Culture in American Society," in *ibid.*, 6.

5. Norma Alarcón, "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of 'the' Native Woman," *Cultural Studies* 4:3 (October 1990): 248–56; Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139–67; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "The Dialectics of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1905–1940," *Feminist Studies* 6:3 (fall 1980): 432–71, and "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class Oppression," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17:3 (1983): 86–108.

6. I am thinking, for example, of the work of George Lipsitz in *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), Sucheng Chan's coproduction of the Mary Paik Lee autobiography *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1990), or Rosalinda Fregoso's "Born in East L.A. and the Politics of Representation," *Cultural Studies* 4:4 (October 1990).

7. On panethnic bridging organizations and the solidarity among ethnic subgroups, see David Lopez and Yen Espiritu, "Panethnicity in the United States: A Theoretical Framework," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13:2 (April 1990): 198–224.

8. I have discussed the contradiction of multiculturalism in popular art and culture in "Imagining Los Angeles in the Production of Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism: Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield*, eds. (forthcoming, University of Minnesota Press).

9. David Lloyd, "Genet's Genealogy: European Minorities and the Ends of Canon," in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), chapter 1.

10. On the political situation of Hawaii and Hawaiian writing, see Haunani-Kay Trask, "Politics in the Pacific Islands: Imperialism and Native Self-Determination," *Amerasia* 16:1 (1990); Geraldine E. Kosasa-Terry, "The Politics of 'Local' Identity in Hawai'i," paper presented

at the Association of Asian American Studies conference, 1992; Rob Wilson, "Blue Hawai'i: Bamboo Ridge as 'Critical Regionalism,'" in *What Is in a Rim?: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, Arif Dirlik, ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993).

11. Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds., *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975); Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and Margarita Donnelly, eds., *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (Corvallis, Ore.: Calyx Books, 1989); Misha Berson, ed., *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian American Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990).

12. Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), xv.

13. Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1946), 147.

14. Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1953), 238.

15. John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976); Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (Boston: David Godine, 1981).

16. For a more extensive interrogation of the ideology of healing in Asian American literature, see David Palumbo-Liu, "Model Minority Discourse and the Course of Healing," forthcoming in Abdul JanMohamed, ed., *Minority Discourse: Ideological Containment and Utopian/Heterotopian Potential*.

17. See Elaine Kim, ed., *Writing Self, Writing Nation: Selected Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Dictée* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993).

18. "Burning Cane," Grace Hong, James Lee, David Maruyama, Jim Soong, and Gary Yee, eds., *Amerasia Journal* 17:2 (1991).

19. Monique Thuy-Dung Truong, "Kelly," *Amerasia Journal* 17:2 (1991), 42.

20. On interpellation, see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

21. See Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," in *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1990), 99. For an elaboration of the unevenness of multiple contradictions, see Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2:2 (June 1985), 91-114.

22. Antonio Gramsci, "Notes on Italian History," *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

introduction

Queer Dinners

While access to college has become more egalitarian, *where* a student attends college and *what* she or he studies have become increasingly tied to social background and gender. —Ann Mullen, *Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education*

What does [the] massive redistribution of wealth and widening of [the] class divide have to do with queer studies? It just happens to be the twenty-year moment when a gay rights movement and the field of queer studies have both emerged. There's no inherent reason why queer studies and gay politics would not reproduce the racialized class inequality and confusion that structure the larger society. But unfortunately, we can't enjoy the luxury of standing on the sidelines as innocent bystanders. We have been implicated. —Allan Bérubé, keynote address for "Constructing Queer Cultures," a conference sponsored by the Program in Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Studies at Cornell University, February 1995

People in forgotten places also act within the institutional and individualized constraints defined by racialization, gender hierarchy, and nationality, and the complex potential mix of these possibilities has produced its own academic specialties old and new. . . . *Constraints* does not mean "insurmountable barriers." However, it does suggest that people use what is available to make a place in the world. —Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning"

Bloomsbury Community College

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well," writes Virginia Woolf in her touchstone 1929 study of gender, class, and genius, *A Room of One's Own*. The fictional context for Woolf's maxim about the intellect and the gut is a comparison of two meals, a lunch at a fantastically resource-rich men's college, "Oxbridge," and a dinner at "Fernham,"

a meagerly funded, upstart women's college. The stringy beef and watery prunes served to the young women of Fernham stand up poorly against the partridges in cream and the meringue-crowned desserts served to the young men of Oxbridge, where mountains of gold and silver have for centuries been poured into lawns and libraries to produce the educated gentlemen of the empire. The men's food does not only look and taste better; the Oxbridge meal also lights a little fire in the spine (there is wine, I should mention), the glow of which travels anatomically upward toward its greater purpose: powering the famously, androgynously, incandescent mind. The food and wine, it turns out, are not sufficient in themselves to create genius, but they prepare the way. To the contrary, among the women at Fernham, with base hunger abated but the palate and mind dulled by those prunes, the evening conversation flags. A clear-eyed, unsatisfied guest, Woolf hesitates only a moment before writing of the women's college, "The dinner was not good."¹

Another dinner scene . . . a vending machine stands half empty, adding insult to dietary injury. Dinner waits behind glass, unspoilable. The new slot for credit cards blinks. It is nearing 6:30 p.m., and this is night school. Students enter my Black Queer Studies classroom, sit, unwrap their candy bars, and wrestle open their bags of chips. They've come from work or directly from another class that ended at 6:20 p.m. We will be in class until 9:50 p.m. We'll get hungry. During our ten-minute break at 8 p.m. the vending machine pushes more cookies, the occasional sticky bun, off its shelves. It's hard to smoke, call home, and get through the vending machine line all in ten minutes. Stragglers apologize. We turn back to Lorde or Baldwin, Nella Larsen or John Keene. One of the students is so pregnant she must periodically excuse herself to walk off her discomfort. In fact the evening's text is Barry Jenkins's Oscar-winning film *Moonlight*.² I turn on the projector. It doesn't work. The always-helpful tech person answers, comes quickly, fixes the problem, and leaves. The projector stops working again. One of my students stands up unasked: "I'll find another room." She returns and tells the class the number of the empty room. We pack up and file out, forty of us. We turn the corner and see another class entering our intended destination. Their projector was broken too, and they beat us to the new room. Eventually we watch *Moonlight* in a third classroom. The projector works, but the sound is screwed up, a mere whisper. We watch breathlessly, not daring to crinkle the candy wrappers, not daring to eat our dinner.³ No time now for discussion. Class dismissed. This is the College of Staten Island (CSI) at the City University of New York (CUNY), a deeply underfunded urban university system committed to serving "the children of the whole people."⁴ And

this is perhaps the queerest school I know, the school at which I came to understand the need for Poor Queer Studies.⁵

In this book I take up the question of the relationship between Queer Studies and the material conditions under which Queer Studies is done in the contemporary academy, a question dramatized above in my reworking of Woolf's historical connection between thinking and dining in the university. How and where are meals turned into androgynously—I'll say queerly—incandescent minds in higher education today? If Queer Studies has over the past thirty years successfully argued, elbowed, and snuck its way into the academy so that its courses can be found in both likely and unlikely places—not only at our Oxbridges and Fernhams but at our Bloomsbury Community Colleges—we might shift attention, à la Woolf, to the question of the resources with and without which queer students and professors teach and learn and write across academic work sites. What does Queer Studies have to say about class sorting within the academy? What is the role of the field within the processes of stratification that can be said to divide the field from itself along the lines of class and institutional status? How might queer collaboration across peer and nonpeer institutions offer a model for the redistribution of intellectual and material resources, and how can that positively impact attendant racial disparities in higher education? How might Poor Queer Studies galvanize interclass, cross-institutional queer formations that do not rely on a unidirectional, aspirational model of progress? And most fundamentally, how can rethinking the work of Queer Studies in the context of students' relative material need and raced/gendered precarity, academics' professional liminality, and underclass institutional identity inform and potentially enrich the field, its pedagogies and theories, and the academy beyond it?

I begin by locating Queer Studies within the broader context of higher education, arguing that the field cannot be separated from the large-scale institutional production of racialized class stratification. As students are sorted on the basis of socioeconomic class by colleges that are themselves increasingly stratified by wealth-based rankings, Queer Studies also ruptures across its disparate sites of material production—that is, at schools high and low. I trace the ramifications of that overlooked queer self-difference and argue for a reorientation of the field away from its prestigious and well-known institutions and toward working-poor and working-class people, places, and pedagogies. I examine the ways Queer Studies has been a vector for upward professional mobility for faculty in the Rich Queer Studies pipeline, and I contrast such traditional, elitist mechanisms of academic advancement with

a competing idea about queer professionalization: that, working against the grain of nearly all queer critiques of the neoliberal academy, Queer Studies professors might cultivate a vocational Queer Studies that trains students to become not only better queer theorists but better queer workers. For workers our students already are, if one teaches at all but a relative handful of selective colleges and universities. Centering Poor Queer Studies mothers, I connect academic life not only to work life but to students' home lives as well, exploring the ways that commuter students—who live at home with their parents, who are themselves mothers, who are first-generation immigrants, who are black and brown and ethnic white—become student teachers of Queer Studies within their homes and home communities (and thus create poor queer familial pedagogies very much in contrast to the bourgeois pedagogy of helicopter parenting that has been so loudly critiqued at high-status institutions). Taking John Keene's work of black queer experimental literature, *Counternarratives*, as my critical object, I telescope out from the Poor Queer Studies classroom to argue that within higher education there exists a widespread state of queer illiteracy that necessitates a reinvestment by Queer Studies in antielitist general education, a shift that might complement more privileged modes of queer-race interdisciplinary inquiry. Ultimately, I propose a model of queer ferrying between resource-rich and -poor institutions as a way of restructuring queer knowledge production in the academy. I begin, however, by naming the hyperstratified state of affairs that must, at present, define Queer Studies in the university.

Class Stratification in Higher Education

It is difficult to find an institution in the United States that sorts people by socioeconomic class as effectively as higher education, even as the university simultaneously proclaims and often fulfills its democratizing promise. In *Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education*, Ann L. Mullen charts this bipolarity in higher ed: "At the same time that more young adults than ever before enter higher education, the college experience has become more disparate, ranging from living in plush campus dormitories and studying the liberal arts at prestigious universities to commuting from home to the local college to earn a preprofessional degree. While access to college has become more egalitarian, *where* a student attends college and *what* she or he studies have become increasingly tied to social background and gender."⁶ Dissecting general democratizing trends in college attendance, Mullen argues that "because of the hierarchical nature

of the U.S. higher educational system and the disparities in the rewards that it offers, it is no longer enough to simply look at who goes to college and who does not. To fully evaluate the promise expressed by the expansion of postsecondary education, one needs to examine the opportunities students of different backgrounds have to attend the various institutions within that system. In other words, we need to look not just at *who* goes to college, but at who goes *where* to college.”⁷ Of special importance for my project is the further point that where one goes to school overwhelmingly predicts both what one will study and whether one will continue that education. This pattern is borne out by Mullen’s case study comparison of Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University. Students with high socioeconomic status tend to enroll at highly selective institutions like Yale, typically study fields in the liberal arts, and are more likely to continue on to PhD programs, while those with low socioeconomic status attend less selective institutions like Southern, choose preprofessional majors, and are less likely to enter graduate programs. On this last point, Mullen finds that “the differences are even more pronounced in relation to enrollment in PhD programs; nearly eight times as many liberal arts graduates enroll in PhD programs as do preprofessional graduates.”⁸

As Mullen’s work and a wealth of educational data have made clear, the tiered or ranked U.S. educational system does not merely reflect class disparities; it actively reproduces them by rewarding the most affluent students with admission to the most prestigious colleges and by channeling our poorest students and students of color into two-year and unranked four-year schools and, even more insidiously, into exploitative for-profit colleges.⁹ Admission to two-year and lower-tier colleges, as opposed to higher-tier schools, dramatically reduces student graduation rates even as it increases student debt. Of course, most of our poorest high school students are excluded from higher education altogether: “In 2012, 82 percent of 18 to 24 year olds from the top family income quartile participated in college, compared with just 45 percent of those in the bottom quartile.”¹⁰ Young black men from low-income families are at particular risk of being excluded by systems of higher education.¹¹ Their relative absence from selective colleges starkly reveals for Kiese Laymon that “no matter how conscientious, radically curious, or politically active I encouraged [them] to be, teaching wealthy white boys . . . [at Vassar] meant that I was being paid to really fortify [their] power.”¹² Laymon makes operations of power visible, naming the ways demographic and institutional data ought to be translated as support of white supremacist, classist university culture.¹³ The material

conditions of racism—literally, the material absence of black male student bodies—shape the possibilities for what counts as the good work of education. Laymon now teaches at the University of Mississippi.

The failure of academia to increase enrollments of black students at the top one hundred colleges and universities has dramatic ripple effects.¹⁴ Brittney Cooper traces the repercussions of institutional racism to the ranks of university faculty, where racist and sexist—and classist—hiring practices further disenfranchise people of color. Cooper writes,

Today, when I travel to give lectures at universities across the country, it is not uncommon for Black faculty, particularly Black women faculty, to pull me aside and whisper that their working conditions feel unsafe, that their colleagues are passive-aggressive, that they are saddled with extra committee work, that they are called to mentor *all* the students of color who come through the department, and are subject to all manner of slights and indignities from colleagues and students alike. Meanwhile, on many occasions they note that there are today far less Black faculty on campus than there were in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. When I began my first academic job in 2009 . . . at a flagship state university, I noted that I was the only Black person hired by the entire college of arts and sciences and one of only three Black faculty members that had been hired in the entire university that year.¹⁵

In the absence of blackness among her institutional cohort, Cooper looks back to *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, for which she wrote the afterword to the volume's 2015 reissue and from which the above quote is drawn. As the academy produces the isolation of black faculty ("I was the only") and the overwork of black faculty ("saddled with extra committee work"), one response by black faculty has been "whispering," or creating fugitive, transitory communities in the midst of conditions hostile to sustained and generative in-person "blackademic" communities.¹⁶ To the extent that the fugitive practices Cooper describes result from race-based exclusions from the top of the class-based, disproportionately white academic hierarchy—and precisely because *But Some of Us Are Brave* reminds us that black lesbian scholarship provided an early intersectional critique of the academy's race-class-gender-sexuality exclusions—I explicitly want to nominate Poor Queer Studies as simultaneously and necessarily a Poor Black Queer Studies knowledge project.

Returning to the case of undergraduate education, we see that the mechanisms of rich white fortification and poor and black exclusion are elaborate

and the statistics staggering. One study puts this state of affairs succinctly in its title, “White Flight Goes to College”: “The tracking of white students into the top-tier colleges perpetuates greater rates of white college completion, especially at elite colleges.”¹⁷ Prestigious schools actively cater to wealthy students and their families, ones who can pay for SAT preparation courses, tutors, tuition, and, so the logic goes, alumni donations. Legacy admissions provide a further boost, a form of affirmative action for the historically monied classes whom university administrators literally, if privately, line up to embrace. Admissions officers at top schools recruit from well-known feeder high schools, many of them private, expensive, and staffed with knowledgeable college counselors. The result, to cite only a few representative statistics, is that at the most selective institutions there are twenty-four times as many high-income students as low-income students.¹⁸ The Ivy-Plus colleges enroll more students from the top 1 percent than from the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution.¹⁹ While nearly 40 percent of college students receive Pell Grants (used by researchers as a proxy for low-income status, with 73 percent of all Pell Grant recipients coming from families making under \$30,000 per year), at certain types of colleges only between 5 and 20 percent of students receive Pell Grants.²⁰ Not surprisingly, the most selective postsecondary institutions in the United States admit the fewest Pell Grant recipients. Though different studies use slightly different definitions of low-income students and selective colleges, there is widespread evidence that top-tier colleges amplify rather than redress the problem of class stratification.²¹ As a general rule, in higher education, riches harm the poor.

One way to address this problem, at least in part, would be for resource-rich schools to admit more low-income students. Unfortunately, for all their smarts and money, these pillars of American education seem incapable of making such a change, despite years of mouthing their commitment to higher education equity.²² A 2016 study by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation finds that the “representation of low-income students at selective colleges and universities has not changed in ten years despite selective institutions’ well-advertised, increased commitment to ‘need-blind admissions’ and ‘no-loan financial aid’ packages. All the while, the value of attending a selective college or university is clear, including higher graduation rates and higher pay for the individual, and greater productivity for the country.”²³ That the most selective colleges cannot figure out how to admit smart, qualified, and interesting poor students in far greater numbers while they have proven themselves quite capable of figuring out how, legally, to perform tax wizardry by using offshore investments to achieve lucrative tax breaks on

their enormous endowments, reflects not only ugly elitist values but also an ironic disconnect: schools like Harvard, Duke, Dartmouth, Stanford, Columbia, University of Southern California, and Johns Hopkins could use the riches earned in tax breaks to identify, inform, encourage, and admit the low-income students they refuse to see and to serve.²⁴ One study of the “hidden supply of high-achieving, low-income students” who do not apply to selective colleges argues that “the number of low-income high achievers is much greater than college admissions staff generally believe. Since admissions staff see only the students who apply, they very reasonably underestimate the number who exist.”²⁵ To my mind, this underestimation is far from very reasonable, especially given the authors’ estimate that “there are, in fact, only about 2 high-achieving, high-income students for every high-achieving, low-income student in the population.”²⁶ Though very selective colleges (which are concentrated in metropolitan areas) look far and wide for alumni donations, they don’t look far and wide for poor students: “In fact, we know from colleges’ own published materials and communications with their authors that many colleges make great efforts to seek out low-income students from their metropolitan areas. These strategies, although probably successful, fall somewhat under the heading of ‘searching under the lamppost.’ That is, many colleges look for low-income students where the *college* is instead of looking for low-income students where the *students* are.”²⁷ If the two authors of this study (from Stanford and Harvard) could find hidden high-achieving, low-income students and imagine ways to move them into selective colleges, why haven’t the top one hundred schools been able to do the same? As recent reporting suggests, the most selective colleges and universities—those schools that own the top of the “Best Colleges” lists, those schools that “very reasonably” cannot see the “hidden” supply of high-achieving, low-income students—are motivated to reinforce rather than interrupt class inequality precisely by their commitment to maintaining their elite ranking.²⁸ Poor students are hidden by elitist educational institutions, not from them.

“We Have Been Implicated”: Rich Queer Studies

The evidence is so overwhelming that we need not argue this case. We must baldly state it: class stratification is an intentional, defining, structural feature of the U.S. academy, one that overlaps with race sorting.²⁹ The solidity of that knowledge allows for other important interventions. I begin *Poor Queer Studies* with the fact of class stratification in order to give traction to

the rather slippery connection that will be my primary focus here: the role of Queer Studies in the hierarchizing mission of higher education. Although it has long been associated with academic elitism—primarily with reference to its outsized interest in white gay male cultural production, the inaccessibility of its high queer theory, and its perceived postmodern, ivory tower anti-identitarianism that can discredit LGBTQ lived-identity experiences—Queer Studies has less often been understood as a mechanism for producing class inequity within higher education. Queer Studies has, in fact, consistently presented itself otherwise, as an antinormative, disruptive cog within the system rather than a producer of “palace discourses.”³⁰ Queer Studies practitioners, such as myself, have pointed to our silo-busting interdisciplinarity, to our penchant for self-critique, to our embrace of the supposedly nonacademic as viable objects of study within the academy. To which I say, “Yes.” We’ve told the story of our activist beginnings, twining together the birth of queer theory with the activism of Queer Nation, even as we’ve rewritten that popular but partial origin story by tracing Queer Studies back through earlier activisms and political commitments, including women of color feminism and, as I explore in chapter 3, our very ability to think “gay academic” as a position of leverage.³¹ In doing so, Queer Studies has positioned itself as constitutionally against the grain, athwart the academy. Yes. When and where we find ourselves normal and normative, we level often careful and often cutting self-critique. Though higher education may present us with the neoliberal problem of queer radical possibility being incorporated and administered, we have, by making institutional management systems visible objects of critique, allowed ourselves to continue to imagine that a defining feature of the field of Queer Studies is its impulse to fuck up the academy. Admittedly ensconced, we can all the more dramatically position ourselves as subversives, thieves, vandals, committed to egalitarianism.³² Again yes. But . . .

The problem with our story is that when Robin Hood stole he gave to the poor. And he didn’t get paid to do it.

If the disruptive democratization of higher education has been Queer Studies’ goal, dating back perhaps to the first conference of the Gay Academic Union in 1973, we have since failed. With notable exceptions, the field of Queer Studies as an academic formation has been and is still defined and propelled by the immense resources of precisely those institutions of higher education that most steadfastly refuse to serve representative numbers of poor students and to hire faculty without high-status academic pedigrees. Though my ultimate interest will be in dramatizing exceptions to this rule and in elaborating

the relationship between exception and rule, I begin by more fully fleshing out the association of the field of Queer Studies with privileged sites of material production of queer knowledge. I will say here—and I will repeat this line throughout as a reminder to myself to follow the undervalued queer methodology of critical compromise—that we both are and are not our institutions. Critical compromise both isolates and dramatizes a problem and promotes a mode of relative questioning. To what extent does academic Queer Studies trade on the value—and therefore the values—of its wealthy institutions, thereby sustaining their commitment to structural inequality? Kristen A. Renn discerns a key tension created by the incorporation of queer methods in higher education research, namely, that “colleges and universities have evolved to tolerate the generation of queer theory from within but have stalwartly resisted the queering of higher education itself.” “What is more nonqueer,” she asks, “than traditional doctoral education or the tenure stream?”³³

To compromise: as much as I agree with Renn’s formulation, it is not always clear—at least to me—whether Queer Studies plays the protagonist or the antagonist in such a normalizing institutional narrative. We don’t have Queer Studies PhD programs, after all, leaving Neville Hoad to wonder whether queer theory ever happened in the academy. “Anecdotally,” Hoad notes in a 2007 essay reprinted in the 2011 volume *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory*, “there are now fewer rather than more jobs described using the keywords *sexuality*, *gender*, *queer*. Has there ever been a tenure-track position advertised and filled in ‘queer theory,’ despite a decade of training graduate students in the imagined subfield?”³⁴ The (apparent) absence of queer tenure-track positions is debilitating to the field, argues Hoad, for “the vitality of a set of intellectual questions cannot rely on the labor of faculty whose primary commitment and institutional responsibility is to something else.” Like his fellow contributors, Hoad writes from the rhetorical position of “after sex.” But his *when* is also very much a matter of *where*, a matter of having time in a place (University of Texas at Austin, a mega-rich “Public Ivy”) that offers the “invigorating intransigence of continuing to work on a set of questions.” In this light, the question of whether queer theory happened is interesting not because the field has been impossible to miss but because if queer theory happened it surely did so at precisely those happening locations from which Hoad and his fellow contributors launched their query, *After Sex?*—Austin, Chicago, Berkeley, Toronto, Tufts, Stanford, Santa Cruz, Davis, Emory, Harvard, Penn, NYU, Amherst, Columbia, Bryn Mawr, the CUNY Graduate Center, and Bates. If queer theory happened, it happened at the places that are most notable for

having the resources to hyperinject intellectual vitality into faculty labor and that are, as a result, the only places where queer theory could have been noticed as having happened. And that class-based spectacularity makes all the difference. A Queer Studies tenure-track position at a no-name school—a job that I know to exist because I have that job—has little chance of being noticed, even in order to be criticized for being, in Renn’s words, nonqueer. Queer or not, you’d never know it happened.

But a brief pause: Bates? Where is Bates? I had to ask. It’s a small, liberal arts college in Lewiston, Maine. The 2017–18 fee for attending Bates is \$66,720, so it’s a fancy school—a Rich Queer Studies school, to use my nomenclature. At the same time, Bates does put a slight twist on things. It requires a compromise, for it reminds me to grapple with the question of how to think about even minor institutional exceptions to the rule in my exploration of class and Queer Studies.³⁵ I am therefore quite thankful to Erica Rand, the professor from Bates who positions her after-sex essay, titled “Queer Theory Here and There,” uncomfortably among those of her fellow contributors precisely because of where she is writing from. Up in Maine, away, “there,” Rand writes from outside the recognizable centers of Queer Studies, “away from the queer-theory action,” as she puts it.³⁶ Rand knows where the action is. By locating queer theory in the usual places and locating Bates outside those places, Rand’s contribution to the collection reminds us to look for queer theory elsewhere, which intersects with one important strand of my argument. At \$66,720 per year, Bates remains an unexceptional example of the ways material resources buoy so much queer scholarship. But Rand at least marginally expands the story of queer theory to farther-flung locations than might be expected. We can go further.

A Queer-Class Fix

Class is barely indexed in most Queer Studies scholarship. I mean this literally; one only need look at the index of the books on the queer shelf. Yes, class can go by many indexical names, but surely “class” ought to be one of them, at least as long as it is *de rigueur* for queer theorists to include class nominally in our list of structures of experience and oppression: gender, sex, race, class, ability. You see that list everywhere, but class manages to slip away in the actual work of queer scholarship. Where class appears centrally, queer often does a disappearing act.

Queer Studies scholars have sometimes attended explicitly to queer-class intersections, with Lisa Henderson’s *Love and Money: Queers, Class and*

Cultural Production and work in the areas of queer labor being notable examples.³⁷ Henderson helps me define class less rigidly than some of the social studies I cite above, since “class categories work in the vernacular and analytic ways to mark a cultural universe.”³⁸ Class is, for Henderson, “the economic and cultural coproduction of social distinction and hierarchy.”³⁹ My use of the term “poor,” addressed more fully below, calls to mind not only an economic position or a cultural identity but, perhaps even more meaningfully, a sense of institutionalized disparity that is crucial to understanding my critique of the field of Queer Studies. Because “class” is a relational term, “poor” signifies not only that higher education is being defunded but that in relation to increasingly rich schools at the top of the hierarchy that hoard their money, poor schools are getting poorer.

When Queer Studies scholars have raised class issues around the concept of disparity, we have often situated those issues socioculturally rather than institutionally. In other words, we have conceptualized queer-class studies using an inside versus outside the academy model in important attempts to theorize our queer/raced/gendered (dis)connections. Certainly, organic queer-class work has emerged from university-affiliated thinkers whose class analyses are inseparable from their academic positions. Occasionally queer scholars have collaborated with experts outside academe to consider, as one early and exemplary book on the subject declares, “homo economics.”⁴⁰ Or the academy has looked to community workers, activists, and artists such as Eli Clare, Samuel Delaney, and Leslie Feinberg to articulate the need for queers to recognize and address queer poverty and class stratification. Less often, queer scholars have navigated class issues methodologically by finding ways to subvert the researcher/researched divide through, for instance, participatory action research in which knowledge making becomes a shared, cross-class endeavor of coinvestigators from inside and outside institutions of higher ed.⁴¹ Each of these approaches has contributed to the articulation of queer-class intersections, and much more bridge-building work needs to be done across the academy/community divide.

Poor Queer Studies differs from other queer-class scholarship, however, in that it frames its inquiry by considering class differences primarily within and oriented around the queer academy. Because higher education is one of the most hierarchical institutions in the U.S., and because Queer Studies has been incorporated—unevenly, to be sure—into curricula and research projects by teachers and scholars at every tier of academe, we have been remiss in failing to interrogate the relationship between Queer Studies done at colleges across class-based institutional tiers. Indeed, we could ask

whether breaking down the borders of the academy/community divide has substituted for and deferred intra-academic interrogations of class structure among the queer professoriate. Institutionality thus threatens to abrogate one of the few reliable principles of queer perversity, tucked away in one of Freud's footnotes to his essay "The Sexual Aberrations": "The highest and the lowest are always closest to each other in the sphere of sexuality."⁴² My hunch is that asymmetrical institutional statuses, the high and the low, can make for interesting, necessarily partial starting points for all involved. The situated lessons of *Poor Queer Studies* will, I hope, resonate with instructors and students at schools that have been left out of the story of Queer Studies, as well as with readers throughout queer academe who wish, in queer fashion, to see the field otherwise.

The absence of a Poor Queer Studies paradigm that might counterbalance current state-of-the-field work is particularly curious in light of the fact that concerns about academic elitism within Queer Studies are an undeniable part of the field's history. Perhaps we used to hear those charges rather more often than we do now. Notably, Jeffrey Escoffier in his 1990 essay "Inside the Ivory Closet: The Challenge Facing Lesbian and Gay Studies" posited a split between post-Stonewall scholars who increasingly enjoyed and industriously courted institutional status within the academy and pre-Stonewall writers and activists whose primary commitments were to their communities and to making scholarship accessible beyond the academy. This split was framed between the academy and the community, between accessibility and elitism, and between older and younger thinkers. Though she disagreed with the stark distinctions Escoffier's argument carved out, Lisa Duggan demonstrated an appreciation of Escoffier's critique of what he called "the younger group of scholars . . . , ambitious young teachers and bright graduate students who trained at elite universities and who occupy jobs at more prestigious institutions."⁴³ Narrating her own version of a Queer Studies split, Duggan initially charted the queer institutional divide along disciplinary lines, arguing that unlike their more employable queer peers in fiction-based English departments, "lesbian and gay *historians* are relatively isolated from two crucial sources of support—the material and institutional support of university history departments, and the intellectual engagement and support of other scholars in the field of lesbian and gay or queer studies. And for both academic and public intellectuals, isolation leads to material as well as to cultural impoverishment and decline. . . . Like any other field, lesbian and gay historians need material support and intellectual and political exchange. For us, isolation equals cultural and professional death."⁴⁴

To what extent such discussions of disciplinary disenfranchisement among scholars at deep-pocketed institutions eclipsed attention to more stark structural disenfranchisements between poor and rich schools will be an ongoing point of interest in this study. In his 1996 review essay, “The Class Politics of Queer Theory,” Donald Morton singles out for praise Nicola Field’s *Over the Rainbow: Money, Class, and Homophobia* while criticizing a raft of scholars located in upper-class university settings (including Duggan) for “shadow-boxing with a collapsing liberal state.”⁴⁵ Morton approvingly quotes independent scholar Will Roscoe (from a Queer Studies listserv): “Much of queer theory seems radical only as long as we ignore the class-base of its production and dissemination.”⁴⁶ Roscoe’s voice reminds me that although I am primarily concerned with amplifying the work of Poor Queer Studies inside the academy, research into independent scholars’ relationships to Queer Studies would surely open up interesting and varied sight lines onto the field, especially insofar as their work is sometimes adopted by Queer Studies (two examples being the seminal work of Jonathan Ned Katz and the genre-busting writing and editing of Alexis Pauline Gumbs). It is, in fact, an independent scholar without means with whom *Poor Queer Studies* most closely shares its vision.

Speaking in 1995 at Cornell University about the role of Queer Studies in the upward redistribution of wealth, working-class independent scholar Allan Bérubé enjoined his academy-based audience to act: “What does [the] massive redistribution of wealth and widening of [the] class divide have to do with queer studies? It just happens to be the twenty-year moment when a gay rights movement and the field of queer studies have both emerged. There’s no inherent reason why queer studies and gay politics would not reproduce the racialized class inequality and confusion that structure the larger society. But unfortunately, we can’t enjoy the luxury of standing on the sidelines as innocent bystanders. We have been implicated.”⁴⁷ Queer Studies has been implicated, for it has indelible, field-defining, field-sustaining material and psychic associations with the most elite colleges and universities in the U.S., like the campus at which Bérubé delivered his talk.⁴⁸ Indeed, the early 1990s was a flashpoint for this critique, with high-class queer theory becoming largely synonymous with Queer Studies (I use the two somewhat interchangeably here, for instance). In 1994, Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer could already reference Diana Fuss’s founding 1991 collection, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, to frame queer theory as “an academic movement—indeed, an elite academic movement centered at least initially in the most prestigious U.S. institutions.... Queer theory emerged in the

late 1980s, publicized through a series of academic conferences held at Yale and other Ivy League universities, in which scholars, primarily from history and the humanities, presented their work on lesbian/gay subjects.”⁴⁹ Stein and Plummer go on to suggest that queer theory, so invigorating and influential in the humanities, could more explicitly inform sociology as well, a field that had invented social constructionism in the first place. Their vision for expanding the disciplinary uses and places of queer theory also implicitly recodes its class locations as, potentially, someplace other than “Yale and other Ivy League universities.”⁵⁰ That vision, unfortunately, didn’t stand a chance. As I explore in chapter 2, disciplinary expansion could not help but secure professional elitism for queer theory, for one of the key functions of disciplinarity is to distinguish between the expert and the novice. Disciplinary expansion and crossover thus quickly subsumed class-based, anti-hierarchical crossover as the dynamic institutional queer move. We need to ask why the rise of interdisciplinarity, so critical of knowledge silos, did not de-stratify higher education in class terms, especially as the supposedly class-attuned framework of intersectionality has been the methodological byword for much interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. And in the case of Queer Studies specifically, how is it that working across fields, sharing knowledge and knowledge practices, and pressing multiple analytic frameworks into service failed to impede the installation of rigid class taxonomies in the university? Why did queer interdisciplinarity not keep its own class-structured institutional houses more dis-ordered?

In fact, attempts at queer-class disordering of the academy often look like relatively enfranchised LGBTQ scholars studying disenfranchised queer people or cultural forms extrinsic to the academy but with whom and which we feel personal/political connections and intellectual attractions. In her study of interdisciplinary “object lessons,” Robyn Wiegman wonders, “Given that subjects of knowledge are never fully commensurate with the objects they seek to authorize, what tactic is on offer from within identity knowledges to handle the contradictions between the educated elite and the subalterns we study and represent?”⁵¹ Cathy Cohen, reflecting on the increasing institutionalization of Black Queer Studies in her foreword to *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson, appreciates that on the one hand the field “extends beyond the classroom into the streets [and] into movements . . . on behalf of and in partnership with black people who may never see the inside of our classrooms.”⁵² On the other hand, Cohen cautions that “as we descend deeper into the ivory tower we must ask ourselves at what cost. To what degree does incorporation

challenge our relevance to the same communities who find themselves at the heart of our research?”⁵³

Heather Love’s body of work offers an important intervention into queer-class studies and so provides a touchstone for my thinking here. Like Cohen and Wiegman, Love is attentive to histories of working-class feminism and antielitist queer women of color, and she links those queer-class histories and knowledges to the ongoing ambivalences of Queer Studies toward class difference within its ranks.⁵⁴ This becomes clear in a recent discussion in which Love reiterates the value of examining queer-class connections from within Queer Studies as class-based scholars of the field, while noting that queer theoretical conversations about “materialism and crisis” are more likely to be centered around critiques of capital than around individual and collective class histories.⁵⁵ But problematically, for scholars for whom “queer studies was a route to upward mobility”—and I join Love in counting myself among this group—the fact of academic elitism in Queer Studies disorients at a level of lived experience that can make a class critique of the field less, rather than more, possible. When speaking about class, it is difficult not to get personal. Yet one doesn’t want to pry. Bérubé, a master of dramatizing queer-class connections and to whom I turn more fully in chapter 3 for an exploration of “queer work,” can thus ask, “Think about it—take any group of queer scholars—how much do you know about their sexual interests and desires, and how much do you know about their income, wealth, and class background? What’s the major taboo operating here—economic or sexual?”⁵⁶ We mark ourselves in queer terms as we unmark ourselves in class terms, even as a function of our participation in the field. For this reason alone the collection *Resilience: Queer Professors from the Working Class* stands out among academic narratives.⁵⁷ In *Resilience*, queer professors turn back toward their lower-class roots, extending those histories into what for many is an ongoing sense of professional liminality and, though they are now members of the professoriate, economic precarity.⁵⁸ Rehistoricizing Queer Studies—and writing a new future for our field—depends on our willingness to tell such class stories not only from below but, overtly, from above and to be implicated in our current institutional positions. *Poor Queer Studies* tethers the cutting-edge, new-new queer ideas that inspire us to the material conditions of our work lives and not only to our most well-resourced, most noticeably fierce intellects.

Love, an English professor at an Ivy League school, turns to deviance studies in sociology to find a language and method by which Queer Studies might understand not only its deviant objects but also the material realities that quietly enable its constitutive claims to deviancy. Specifically,

she reconsiders the uses of objectification, long decried by Queer Studies as normalizing, to perspectivize the institutional positions of self-described “subversive” practitioners of queer theory: “Queer theory was a revolt against scholarly expertise in the name of deviance, yet it resonated in many ways with academic norms. Queer academics might also be activist, organic intellectuals, radical experimenters in their personal, professional, and political lives, but they are also superordinates in the context of the university: professional knowledge workers, teachers, and administrators.”⁵⁹ Asking, “Whose side are we on?,” Love suggests that academicians are always university insiders, no matter what else we are. “Can we hold onto the critical and polemical energy of queer studies as well as its radical experiments in style and thought while acknowledging our implication in systems of power, management, and control?” Love asks. “Will a more explicit avowal of disciplinary affiliations and methods snuff out the utopian energies of a field that sees itself as a radical outsider in the university?”⁶⁰ Love’s insights about the need to make our queer disciplinary affiliations explicit resonate with the project of *Poor Queer Studies* because they encourage a queer method of professional hair-splitting that might proceed, for example, with descriptive accounts of intra-academy differences among Queer Studies people and places. Or, to begin again, queer dinners. We know, having been told in any number of heartening and disheartening ways, the simple truth that all Queer Studies work is not equal. What we need to know better and reckon with is the structural truth that all Queer Studies working conditions are not equal. What if we connected our queer ideas and pedagogies to the material realities of their production (our research budgets and our college websites, our course loads and our commutes, our embodiments and our built environments, our leave time and our overwork, our library holdings and our bathroom gender policies, our raced work sites and our service work, our salaries and our second jobs) in order to understand those ideas and pedagogies as class- and status-based knowledges that cannot be universalized? What can telling the material histories of Queer Studies do to address the problem of class stratification in higher education? What if by engaging with such questions Queer Studies can fix the academy, not fuck it up?

Why “Poor” Queer Studies?

My argument is not that Queer Studies at rich schools isn’t sometimes interesting and sometimes transformative and sometimes aware that its production is, first and foremost, a workplace issue. My argument is not that

Queer Studies happens only at rich schools. Indeed, my half-plagiarized question, What's poor about Queer Studies now?, comes from the opposite impulse: to take into consideration Queer Studies elsewhere and otherwise in the class-stratified academy. That work is being done, as demonstrated by internal university publications such as "'We Could Do That!': A Guide to Diversity Practices in California Community Colleges" and by studies published by academic presses such as the 2015 volume *Expanding the Circle: Creating an Inclusive Environment in Higher Education for LGBTQ Students and Studies*, edited by John C. Hawley.⁶¹ These collections, the content of which cannot be separated from the institutional diversity of their contributors, serve as both counterevidence and evidence for my argument that while LGBTQ programs and curricula dot the educational landscape, the field of Queer Studies comes into view much more narrowly. "'We Could Do That!'" and *Expanding the Circle* mark a shift away from Rich Queer Studies even as they show the difficulty of such a shift. Expanding the circle that delimits the field names the work still to be done. I call that work Poor Queer Studies.

Laden with stigmatizing connotations, "poor" has fallen out of critical use, replaced by powerful analytics such as precarity and "asset-based" frameworks such as resilience.⁶² "Poor" therefore seems an improper word to anchor a new Poor Queer Studies knowledge project. But I have several reasons for using the word. Far from flatly derogatory, my terminology, Poor Queer Studies, invokes a complex and contested set of meanings. Uncomfortably, it foregrounds a term associated with an outmoded figuration of socioeconomic hardship: "Of a person or people: having few, or no, material possessions; lacking the means to procure the comforts or necessities of life, or to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in society; needy, necessitous, indigent, destitute. Sometimes: *spec.* so destitute as to be dependent upon gifts or allowances for subsistence. Opposed to *rich*."⁶³ Surely many of my students, in their pursuit of a degree that can (so the social mobility narrative goes) confer middle-class status, would reject this descriptor, which becomes sharper in tone as it proceeds until it ends in insulting negativity, "opposed to rich." The term "poor" tethers them too statically to the wrong end of an educational narrative premised on social mobility. I argue, however, that "poor" is far from a static term. Indeed, it accomplishes a good deal of descriptive and conceptual work, especially as it enables Poor Queer Studies to be positively opposed to Rich Queer Studies. As Poor Queer Studies foregrounds the lack of access to material resources that provides one of the most powerfully recurring threads in my

queer classrooms, it also connotes other impoverishments—those holes in the field imaginary where Rich Queer Studies cannot see its own class- and status-based epistemologies. In other words, if we are not used to opposing Poor Queer Studies to Rich Queer Studies, this is because Rich Queer Studies has not conceptualized its poor queer blind spots concretely enough to be opposed to them. The fact that poor queer schools are getting poorer in relation to rich ones enlarges those blind spots, making cross-class relationships and ideas less visible. Actively opposing Rich Queer Studies is not only a way for Poor Queer Studies to be seen but a way to hold the field together in queer-class tension.

With the benefit of institutional distance from the places of Rich Queer Studies, Poor Queer Studies perceives the field's high-class deficits. Poor Queer Studies, in part, fills in those gaps and in the process renames a discipline typically imagined elsewhere that must be reimagined at unrecognizable and unfashionable schools such as the college where I work, the College of Staten Island. I'll begin to lay the groundwork for conceptualizing Poor Queer Studies by briefly sketching CSI's college portrait below. How are we queer, here? Chapter 1 expands that vision by tracing CSI's queer faculty genealogy and arguing for the value of historically based queer case studies of colleges that don't easily appear on the map of the field.

Finally, Poor Queer Studies locates the pedagogical convergence of Queer Studies with my students' socioeconomic as well as socioaffective "histories of arrival."⁶⁴ Contextualized by this larger trajectory, "poor" names a dimension of experience that, perhaps more than any other structure of difference *including sexuality*, forms the basis of my queer pedagogy at CSI. I cannot overstate this fundamental point. Though my pedagogical refrain (the explicit course topics, readings, vocabulary) is queerness, the bass notes for my Queer Studies pedagogy at CUNY are the racialized and gendered socioeconomic, material, and psychic realities through which reverberate that freighted meter of class status, "poor." Below, I want to play a few of those queer-class bass notes to set the tone for *Poor Queer Studies*.

Realizing Poor Queer Studies

Understanding the habitus of a Poor Queer Studies school from afar can be difficult. One can begin by looking at the statistics and the marketing that combine to create the college profile. While the broad context for *Poor Queer Studies* is the deeply class-stratified system of higher education in the U.S. within which the academic discipline of Queer Studies has struggled

and grown, the more immediate site for my relocation of queer teaching and research is the deeply underfunded, open-admissions, public college where I work, CSI, as well as the larger university system of which CSI is a part, the working-poor CUNY. The College of Staten Island has a student population of 12,211 undergraduates and 1,036 graduate students, 343 full-time, tenure-track faculty, and 819 non-tenure-track faculty, 722 of whom are adjuncts. More than 70 percent of our first-time freshmen enter as associate degree students. Of the undergraduates, 43.6 percent are white, 26.5 percent Hispanic, 13.9 percent black, and 11.1 percent Asian.⁶⁵ More than half are “low-income students,” and 15 percent have family incomes under \$20,000.⁶⁶ Strikingly, CSI students have traditionally had the highest family incomes in the CUNY system due in large part to the particular demographics of the island’s population. While CSI’s student body overall is less racially diverse than CUNY schools in other boroughs, we have much higher rates of traditionally underserved white ethnic students, primarily Italian Americans, who are a protected class at CUNY.⁶⁷ Like their peers across the system, CSI students work, often full time. In one of my recent upper-level Queer Studies classes, students worked for money an average of thirty-two hours per week, in addition to taking care of children and/or parents, with whom most of them still live. Any number of recent headlines that claim to break the story that students are workers too read like old news to these student-workers.

And then there are the qualitative data captured in table I.1, “Realizing Poor Queer Studies.” These daily observations and unremarkable interactions are where this project began, long before I poked my nose into the institutional research. Renny Christopher indexes the utility of such mixed methods of research into working-class pedagogy, writing that “to understand the situation of working-class students in higher education, scholars in working-class pedagogy have focused not only on empirical data but on qualitative information as well, both observational and biographical.”⁶⁸ Mixing methods, my introduction also necessarily breaks form here, as these moments and impressions did not come to me in order or in a coherent research narrative. Working at an institution with a lot of poor and working-class students, you come to understand the incredible drama of class mobility. But, ironically, that drama often registers as boring, if not wholly unremarkable. The reality, the intersectional race-class-gender precarity, is often understood, pieced together, only later. It took me many years at CSI to realize I was teaching Poor Queer Studies.

Table I.1. Realizing Poor Queer Studies

<i>It looks like</i>	<i>When in reality</i>
Stasis, a Latina student in her seventh year of school.	She is terrified of graduating and remaining single without the excuse of college to defend her against her parents' heteronormative impatience.
Leaving a meeting with a student group and then bumping into a former student.	You remember that the white student you just bumped into was homeless when they took your course. This fact is brought to mind because one of the Latinx students in the meeting you just came from discussed being, currently, homeless.
A student bringing her four-year-old to class to avoid domestic violence.	The brown child's presence prompts a spontaneous pedagogical innovation. The queer studies students, in solidarity with their distressed peer, organically adapt to the changed classroom space by spelling out all the s-e-x words in our discussion.
Failure, an F paper written, judging by the punctuation, on a cell phone and pasted into Word.	He works two jobs and must use his phone to thumb in his essays during breaks between deliveries. He doesn't own a computer.
A general education class at an open-admissions, two-year and four-year institution.	Being unable to distinguish between students working toward their associate degree and those working toward their bachelor's degree. Being surprised at the frequent disconnect between a student's capabilities and her educational goals.
The Asian American gender-conforming student who never says anything.	They are transgender and need to leave home. But they never tell you, their queer studies professor, either of these things until years later, in an email from across the country.
Tiresome responsibility, a young single black mother.	She makes the decision to study abroad for a semester.
A mixed-race student who comes out as having a close relative who is HIV+.	Though he knows more than any of his peers about living with HIV/AIDS, he thinks Magic Johnson is no longer HIV+ because he is rich enough to afford the cure.
A moment of bonding after class between a white gay professor from the sticks and a white butch working-class lesbian student.	She asks, "Professor, are we going to read any books by white people?," revealing the moment to be one of shared white privilege forged through homosexual class identification.
A three-hour commute from the Bronx.	She is a young black lesbian who is closeted at home, who wanted to go away to school but couldn't afford it, and CSI is the furthest CUNY campus from her neighborhood. No one knows her at CSI.

Each of these examples marks a queer-class connection, intersections made busier by race and gender dynamics. They create the background and, now, the foreground for teaching Poor Queer Studies at my college. Plenty of other data inform these moments, including middle-class and even upper-class messages and meanings. This other data—the noise created nearer the top of the economic ladder that is almost always taken to represent higher education in general—can often drown out the poor queer data, which students and faculty are so incentivized to turn away from already. Even Poor Queer Studies offers such an incentive, if for no other reason than this: a Queer Studies professor inevitably models a direction, a high-status if not high-class queer career. My very presence links queerness to social mobility and superordinate status. Queerness, when it looks like a Queer Studies professor, looks like a way out, a way up, away from poor.

Relative success, judged by one's own lights, becomes a problem in this regard. How can I assert both that CSI is one of the queerest schools I know, a claim I pursue in chapter 1, and that it represents a site of queer marginalization and unknowability? How do I account for my annual salary, at age forty-seven and after thirteen years in this job, of \$97,628? (Note: this statistic is public information because I am a public employee. Bringing the question of what that salary means—how it translates into class status in New York City, how it connotes failure or success to my students—is a terrific pedagogical prompt for my Poor Queer Studies classrooms. I wonder, if I taught at a private college, would I so readily disclose how much I make?) More generally, how does my analysis account for the inordinate successes of some of my colleagues, even as I insist on drawing readers' critical gaze back to the material and structural impoverishments of our work? Look at our recent history in the CSI English department alone. My colleague Tyehimba Jess won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry and the 2017 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for *Olio*. For her book of poetry, *Incendiary Art*, my colleague Patricia Smith won the 2018 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, the 2017 Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the 2018 NAACP Image Award, and was the runner-up for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry. Faculty in our creative writing concentration alone include National Book Award finalists and have won three Guggenheims, multiple Fulbrights, two Whiting awards, multiple National Poetry Slam championships, the Library of Congress Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize, the American Academy of Poets Lenore Marshall Prize, multiple Pushcart Prizes, the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a Cullman Center Fellowship, multiple Publishing Triangle awards including the Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement, the CLAGS Kessler life-

time achievement in LGBTQ Studies award, the MFK Fisher Book Award, the grand prize in documentary at the Nashville International Film Festival, and fellowships and residencies far too numerous to mention.⁶⁹ Beyond this faculty snapshot, CSI produced the second most Fulbright Scholars of any master's-level institution in the U.S. in 2016–17. Recently, CUNY was ranked sixth in the nation on CollegeNET's Social Mobility Index, meaning we are good at helping students who start poor rise through socioeconomic strata. And CSI was ranked number 504 on the 2017–18 Forbes list of "America's Top Colleges."⁷⁰ Beyond these and other measured successes lie the more persuasive daily experiences of students, faculty, and staff coming together to do good work for which we are proud of each other. I am painfully aware of being perceived by my CSI community as undermining that work by attaching it to "poor," though that would be a misinterpretation of my goals here. On the other hand, I have no worries about being perceived by my colleagues as undermining our work by attaching it to "queer."⁷¹ That contrast helps to set the stakes of this study, for it implies a competing set of institutional attachments—poor versus queer—that I argue ought not compete, not at CSI and not in Queer Studies across the academy.

As this book turns toward an imbrication of queerness and class that schools and scholars turn away from, it wrestles with the question of queer-class research practices. Methodologically, this study confronts the "problem of impossible evidence" that attends queer scholarship, which is characteristically concerned with elucidating the "vagaries of embodied life."⁷² Ruth Wilson Gilmore helps me to frame my encounter with the vagaries of queer-class institutional life when she writes that "people in forgotten places also act within the institutional and individualized constraints defined by racialization, gender hierarchy, and nationality, and the complex potential mix of these possibilities has produced its own academic specialties old and new: the various branches of the social sciences, area studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, cultural studies—the latter three dedicated to the study of disabling (in the sense of both debilitating and undoing; see Hart 2002b) constraints. *Constraints* does not mean 'insurmountable barriers.' However, it does suggest that people use what is available to make a place in the world."⁷³ With slippery issues of class and race and status at the heart of the matter, queer methodological constraints (or queer messes⁷⁴) arise, particularly as I explore embodied pedagogical relations between teacher and student, professional distinctions between high-status and low-status Queer Studies professors, the relationship of scholar to institution, and the articulations of materiality to theory. Much of my queer-class research practice

is grounded by anecdotal evidence and educated guesses about working in spaces of queer precarity in higher education, and I adapt the queer narrative case study model to represent and interpret that evidence. My approach values working people, both students and colleagues, as well as working with people. Student stories, which I typically reanimate here in composite form in order to anonymize them, galvanize the larger story about queer pedagogy and social class that I tell. Institutional spaces, including Queer Studies classrooms, offices, campuses, academic centers, and queer conferences, help to structure and inform those narratives of student and faculty access to and production of queer ideas.

My inquiry is therefore, at least in part, unavoidably parochial, arising from my queer professional positioning at CSI. It must be so, and this assertion opens out onto my larger argument about the ways that Queer Studies must encounter itself at institutions high and low and in between. A special issue of *GLQ*, “Queering the Middle: Race, Region, and a Queer Midwest,” frames “the middle” as a new queer vantage, “a troubled, unstable perch buttressed by the dominance of the coasts and the ‘South.’”⁷⁵ The middle references the Midwest and the idea of region, which become at once geographic locations and discursive formations. The authors position the middle as at once between urban and rural and also shot through by them. One result is that traditional queer mappings, such as urban migration narratives that tend to stabilize a country/city divide, are forced to incorporate a productive confusion of scale. Regionalism pulls extremes of urban and rural toward its powerful, indefinite optic, the middle. Attending to the regional enables dynamic interscalar perspectives at the level of the subnational and global to emerge as well.

Conceptually, the middle is stretchy, and so it can contribute to an analysis of Staten Island and the college named after it, even though Staten Island is certainly not Midwestern and though it is colloquially described as one of New York City’s outer boroughs. As a forgotten object of a geographical imagination that privileges the urban/rural binary, Staten Island gestures toward a kind of epistemological middle space that concepts such as region help to elucidate. Region can “illustrate the unruliness of racial, class, and gender dynamics that transgress easy rural or urban organization and signal what escapes both metronormative locales and their alternative spaces.”⁷⁶ Staten Island is urban in parts, but not compared to neighboring Manhattan or much of Brooklyn. It is located in the deep blue political culture of the East Coast, yet it voted overwhelmingly for President Trump. There are no

lesbian or gay bars on this island of 500,000 residents, yet it is home to one of the queerest of CUNY's twenty-four campuses.

What I like about a theory of the middle is that it doesn't presuppose a perfect fit between critical lens and object of study but rather offers a flexible framework for thinking about place and queerness. Poor Queer Studies requires a similar kind of analytic, if for no other reason than that a study of any institution of higher education preconditionally excludes the study of most poor people because, systematically, most poor people are excluded from college education. In 2013, the nationwide college enrollment rate for "low-income students" (the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes) who had recently graduated high school was just 46 percent.⁷⁷ But only about 76 percent of children from poor families graduate high school in the first place.⁷⁸ So even if it were possible to define "poor" (as the bottom 20 percent, for instance), my focus on college students and the university spaces and protocols I am calling Poor Queer Studies would still construct a very partial object of analysis. But paradoxically, because "poor" cannot be precisely defined, I am able, within the limited context of the class-stratified academy, to use the term in a much more inclusive way than a strict definition permits. Neither CSI nor CUNY are uniformly or unambiguously poor. Nor are the students. Nor are the faculty. Yet impoverishment sets the conceptual baseline for much that happens here, even down to the finer points of heating and air conditioning as my college institutes cost-saving measures for the physical plant. When I take up concerns of the middle, of the working class, even at times of the upper classes and the rich, I hope to reveal the way that Poor Queer Studies can be more pertinent to those concerns than has been realized.

I propose that "poor," like "Midwest," operates as "both a material space and a discursive construct" within higher education.⁷⁹ "Poor" enables me to combine critical regionality with critical disciplinarity to conceptualize Poor Queer Studies through an analysis of queer pedagogy and scholarship at an outer-borough campus of the nation's largest, and by some measures poorest, public urban university. Of course, I also have to convince you that you should care, which is to say that I have to promise you that there will be a payoff for looking with me at and from my college. Siobhan Somerville, one of the coeditors of the "Queering the Middle" issue of *GLQ*, elsewhere provides a vital model of contextualized queer knowledge production within higher education. In "Locating Queer Culture in the Big Ten," Somerville describes her process of designing an undergraduate course around the question, "How . . . might we understand the role of Midwestern public universities

like the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign] in the production of queer culture?”⁸⁰ Creating an archive of queer University of Illinois artifacts such as Ann Bannon’s lesbian novel *Odd Girl Out* (1957), which is set in a fictionalized “Champlain,” helps to rewrite not only specific university histories that have hidden local queer cultural productions but also broad urban-centric histories of sexuality that have hidden suburban, rural, and regional queer data. Working from Somerville’s model in chapter 1 especially, I use CSI as a case study for the production of queer knowledge in an overlooked place. My intention isn’t to permanently center this particular work site or even to center the intellectual project of Poor Queer Studies to the exclusion of the heady archive of Rich Queer Studies, but to make the field stretchy enough to accommodate and respond to its many class locations.

My History of Arrival

I end this introduction with my history of arrival at CSI. How I came to CSI and how I came to this project are vital contexts for the knowledge produced in/as this book. In the winter of 2006, after three years on the job market in search of a tenure-track position, I received a job interview at the Modern Language Association annual convention (back when CSI could still afford to interview at the unconscionably expensive production that is the MLA) and, subsequently, an invitation for a campus visit for the position of assistant professor of Queer Studies in the English department. The story of my ultimate hire contains several quirky features of plot, setting, and character that I now recognize as fortuitous, for they have made it possible to imagine the narrative of this book. First, I had never heard of CSI, as perhaps the reader has not. I had lived on both coasts, in the Midwest, and in the South, but Staten Island was not on any of my maps. If it had been, I likely would have heard about its status as “the forgotten borough” or, as the title of a book by two of my colleagues has it, *Staten Island: Conservative Bastion in a Liberal City*.⁸¹ But after living thirty-three-plus years in rural America, much of it surrounded by fields and farms and homophobia and racism, and, relatedly, having been closeted through nearly all of my twenties, I knew the most important fact of the job: it was in New York. Recent work in queer rural studies, had I had the benefit of it then, would not have made a dent in my single-minded queer career trajectory. It was gay New York or gay San Francisco or bust. So while I was delighted to be making my way to Staten Island for my campus interview that winter of 2007, I was initially also a bit dumbfounded to find that there was a Queer Studies job at

a school I had never heard of. I had only heard about Queer Studies at places that I'd heard of—a meaningful tautology for this book.

Now, having received tenure and promotion at this job for which (quirky subplot) I came in runner-up, I am anything but surprised by the association of CSI with queer intellectual work. Now it is I who guarantees to disbelieving acquaintances and friends that professor of Queer Studies is a job and that it is a job at CSI, the sole public institution of higher education in the borough. Indeed, and I repeat, CSI is one of the queerest colleges I've known. This statement is perhaps the quirkiest one of all, for I attended Wabash College, an all-male, avowedly not gay undergraduate college, I earned a PhD in English at Indiana University, home to the famous Kinsey Institute (and the only graduate program to which I was accepted), and for the three years prior to beginning my tenure-track job at CSI, I held a Mellon Post-doctoral Fellowship in the University Writing Program at Duke University, the so-called birthplace of queer theory.⁸² In an important way, the story of this book is the story of that career path, especially the first and last steps. The first step was from the farmland of Indiana to college at a place that would pay my way. I didn't fully understand that Wabash was a rich school; I just knew that I couldn't pay and that the college would offer me a substantial scholarship. By the time I took the most recent step, which brought me to CSI, I understood what a rich school was. I was coming from Duke, the Ivy of the South, its architecture Gothic revival, its lawns flat green, its gardens lush. I was going to CSI (no moving expenses, of course), which had settled into the partially renovated facilities of the notoriously abusive Willowbrook State School for children with intellectual disabilities (subject of Geraldo Rivera's 1972 exposé). My impression upon seeing CSI for the first time was that there were fewer trees than one might reasonably expect on a 204-acre campus. At this commuter school, parking lots trump landscaping.⁸³

For my teaching talk during my CSI interview, I was asked to prepare a presentation called "What Happens in a Queer Studies Classroom?" My point for the moment is that my future colleagues were not actually asking what happens in a Queer Studies classroom. They were asking how I would teach Queer Studies here, to these students, at this school, in this system. Figuring out the answers to those questions, how to answer them, why they're important, has been my greatest challenge and joy for the past thirteen years. *Poor Queer Studies* tells the story of my reeducation in Queer Studies, here, in a place my field was not supposed, not imagined, to be.

notes

Introduction

1. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 18.

2. Jenkins, *Moonlight*.

3. In an interesting essay, Suzanne Sowinska also thinks about working-class relationships to the academy in terms of food, recalling meals missed (“claiming I wasn’t hungry when I was” [152]) and of meals eaten (“I can imagine that most students from middle-class backgrounds have not had the experience of enjoying dining hall food—because it is like ‘eating out’ every night” [155]). See Sowinska, “Yer Own Motha Wouldna Reckanized Ya.”

4. The City College of New York, the first of what would become the twenty-four campuses of the CUNY system, was originally founded as the Free Academy of the City of New York in 1847. The Free Academy’s first president, Dr. Horace Webster, described the mission of the Free Academy in terms of a class- and status-conscious experiment in democratic education: “The experiment is to be tried, whether the children of the people, the children of the whole people, can be educated; and whether an institution of the highest grade, can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few” (“Our History,” City College of New York, <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/about/history>).

5. Here and throughout the book I have chosen to capitalize this unheard-of discipline, Poor Queer Studies, in order to draw attention to the substantive work of conceptualizing the field through the lens of class. I do so with Rich Queer Studies and Black Queer Studies as well. Queer Studies is capitalized for consistency and does not indicate the uncritical elevation of that standard naming of the field.

6. Mullen, *Degrees of Inequality*, 2.

7. Mullen, *Degrees of Inequality*, 5.

8. Mullen, *Degrees of Inequality*, 157.

9. See, for example, Cahalan and Perna’s Pell Institute study of higher education equity in the U.S., *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States*. Renny Christopher’s 2005 essay, “New Working-Class Studies in Higher Education,”

offers a succinct analysis of slightly earlier research on how contemporary college students “are distributed through our multitiered higher education system” (210).

10. Cahalan and Perna, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States*, 11.

11. See Harper and Griffin, “Opportunity beyond Affirmative Action,” 43–46.

12. Laymon, *Heavy*, 191.

13. For fascinating related scholarship on the white supremacist foundations of the American university, see Harris, Campbell, and Brophy, *Slavery and the University*.

14. For a helpful visualization of the data from the National Center for Education Statistics, see Ashkenas, Park, and Pierce, “Even with Affirmative Action, Blacks and Hispanics Are More Underrepresented at Top Colleges than 35 Years Ago.”

15. Cooper, “Afterword,” 382.

16. See Lavelle Porter’s 2019 study, *The Blackademic Life*.

17. See Carnevale and Strohl, “White Flight Goes to College,” 2.

18. Glynn, *Opening Doors*, 47.

19. Chetty et al., “Mobility Report Cards,” 1.

20. Carnevale and Van Der Werf, “The 20% Solution,” 10–11.

21. For another measure of economic mobility by higher education institution, see the Obama-era Department of Education’s “College Scorecard” at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>. For a comparison, see Looney, “A Comparison between the College Scorecard and Mobility Report Cards.”

22. The most recent such commitment is called the American Talent Initiative (<https://americantalentinitiative.org/>). Institutional members of the initiative are those colleges and universities that enroll the lowest percentage of poor students and the highest percentage of rich students. More established programs include the Jack Cooke Kent Foundation (<https://www.jkcf.org/>) and QuestBridge (<https://www.questbridge.org/>).

23. Giancola and Kahlenberg, “True Merit,” 37.

24. See Stephanie Saul’s *New York Times* article “A Push to Make Harvard Free Also Questions the Role of Race in Admissions.” College endowments held \$516 billion in 2014, with 74 percent of the money held by 11 percent of institutions, according to a December 2015 Congressional Research Service report by Sherlock et al., “College and University Endowments.”

25. Hoxby and Avery, “The Missing ‘One-Offs,’” 3.

26. Hoxby and Avery, “The Missing ‘One-Offs,’” 9–10.

27. Hoxby and Avery, “The Missing ‘One-Offs,’” 44.

28. See, for example, Benjamin Wermund’s investigative report “How U.S. News College Rankings Promote Economic Inequality on Campus.”

29. See Jonathan Rothwell’s memo of December 18, 2015, from the Brookings Institute, “The Stubborn Race and Class Gaps in College Quality”: “But simply going to college is not enough. A great deal hinges on the quality of the education on offer. First-generation, black, and Hispanic students are getting a lower-quality education than their more socially advantaged peers. Gaps in college quality reflect disparities in education in the preceding years, of course. But right now, if anything,

the college years see those gaps widen even further—which puts the ideal of equal opportunity even further out of reach.”

30. Herman Gray, drawing from the work of Clyde Taylor, notes that resistance to elitist knowledge practices can morph into reproduction of those practices. See Gray, *Cultural Moves*, 114–16.

31. See, for instance, Garber, *Identity Poetics*.

32. See Kadji Amin’s *Disturbing Attachments* for an insightful rendering of Queer Studies’ commitment to egalitarianism.

33. Renn, “LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education,” 132.

34. Hoad, “Queer Theory Addiction,” 139.

35. The most frequent exceptions to the rule of locating Queer Studies at rich schools are the large public universities where much terrific queer work has been done and where, simultaneously, resources have been unconscionably drained by state governments. Most of that queer work happens in the humanities and social sciences. Yet many of these schools are flagship institutions where national reputations can be made and status traded upon. Anthony Grafton, in his survey of books on the American university in the *New York Review of Books*, thus sees schools such as Rutgers-New Brunswick, Ohio State, Indiana, Florida State, Iowa, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison joining with more recognizably elite institutions such as Virginia, William and Mary, and Berkeley to make up “the top, the shiny part of the iceberg that rises above sea level.” See Grafton, “Our Universities.” William Deresiewicz similarly expands the definition of elite education to include “second-tier selective schools” in “Don’t Send Your Kids to the Ivy League.”

36. Rand, “After Sex?!” 272.

37. I take up the queer-labor intersection more fully in chapter 3 and Harney’s and Moten’s black-queer-class notion of the undercommons in chapter 5.

38. Henderson, *Love and Money*, 5.

39. Henderson, *Love and Money*, 5.

40. See Gluckman and Reed, *Homo Economics*. A more recent collection is Jacobsen and Zeller, *Queer Economics*. See also Follins and Lassiter, *Black LGBT Health in the United States*.

41. See, for example, Jessica Fields’s description of her work with women in prison in “The Racialized Erotics of Participatory Research.”

42. Freud, “The Sexual Aberrations,” 88.

43. Escoffier, “Inside the Ivory Closet,” 105.

44. Duggan, “The Discipline Problem,” 179.

45. Morton, “The Class Politics of Queer Theory,” 472.

46. Morton, “The Class Politics of Queer Theory,” 472.

47. Bérubé, *My Desire for History*, 242.

48. For a fascinating example of how an individual discipline can be implicated in the larger trend of class stratification in higher education, see Christopher Find-eisen’s “Injuries of Class.” Findeisen argues that MFA programs purport to contest establishment values while continuing the mass exclusion of poor people from higher education: “When we look closer at how the last forty years have altered American history, we see that Kmart realism [which refers to a Raymond Carver-esque style

of writing difference] becomes symbolic for the [writing] program era not for how it marks the presence of the lower classes in higher education but, more powerfully, for how it replaces them—allowing lower-class culture to proliferate without any meaningful increase in lower-class enrollment” (291).

49. Stein and Plummer, “I Can’t Even Think Straight,” 181.

50. As sociologist Amin Ghaziani and I argue in *Imagining Queer Methods*—an argument made possible thanks in part to the work of Stein and Plummer—recent interdisciplinary reorientations within Queer Studies away from theory and toward questions of queer methods and methodologies can both reveal and galvanize interclass, cross-institutional queer formations that aren’t part of the typical story of the field.

51. Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 7.

52. Cohen, “Foreword,” xiii.

53. Cohen, “Foreword,” xii. I elaborate on the necessary imbrication of Poor Queer Studies and Black Queer Studies in chapter 5, especially as that pairing represents the class-race foil to another field formation, Rich Black Queer Studies.

54. For an excellent primer, see Love’s essay “Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory.”

55. The special issue of *GLQ* in which Love’s comments appear (as part of the feature “Queer Studies, Materialism, and Crisis” by Crosby et al.) is titled “Queer Studies and the Crisis of Capitalism.”

56. Bérubé, *My Desire for History*, 243.

57. Oldfield and Johnson, *Resilience*.

58. Other anthologies of working-class academics also point to the multiplicity of tensions around changing class, including feeling like you haven’t, ever, and feeling like you have, irrevocably. Carolyn Leste Law, coeditor along with C. L. Barney Dews of *This Fine Place So Far from Home: Voices of Academics from the Working Class*, writes that “ambivalence, more than any other theme, is the common denominator in the stories . . . that are collected here” (2).

59. Love, “Doing Being Deviant,” 87.

60. Love, “Doing Being Deviant,” 90.

61. See Gabriner, Schiorring, and Waldron, “‘We Could Do That!’”

62. See White, “Beyond a Deficit View.”

63. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “poor,” n.d.

64. See Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

65. See the CSI Institutional Profile, compiled by the Office of Institutional Research, <https://www.csi.cuny.edu/about-csi/institutional-effectiveness/institutional-research/institutional-profile>.

66. “2018 Social Mobility Index,” CollegeNET, accessed June 6, 2019, <http://www.socialmobilityindex.org/>; “Economic Diversity and Student Outcomes at College of Staten Island,” *New York Times*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/college-of-staten-island>.

67. “The ‘protected classes,’ delineated in Executive Order 11246, include American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Women. Updated federal guide-

lines further expanded these protected classes to include two or more races. As of December 9, 1976, the Chancellor of the City University of New York identified Italian Americans as a protected group at the University” (6). “CUNY Affirmative Action Plan for Italian Americans,” accessed June 6, 2019, <http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/hr/central-office-human-resources/FINAL-2016-Italian-American-AAP.pdf>.

68. Christopher, “New Working-Class Studies in Higher Education,” 213.

69. For more on the excellence of poetry faculty at CUNY, see Harris, “How CUNY Became Poetry U.”

70. “America’s Top Colleges,” *Forbes*, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/top-colleges/list/12/#tab:rank>.

71. Interesting to me is that I assume my colleagues will easily discern that I am not romanticizing our work by making it “poor.” I assume this because, of all the affective energies at CSI, a shared romanticization of our work does not seem to be among them. “Poor” works against the “theft of pride” that Willy Staley, in “When ‘Gentrification’ Isn’t about Housing,” associates with the psychic gentrification accomplished when the language of poverty becomes a metaphor used in the “repackaging of [poor] people’s lifestyles.” Also see Kathi Weeks’s “Down with Love” for an analysis of the ways injunctions to love our jobs draw on a discourse of romanticization reminiscent of unpaid domestic labor in order to attach workers ever more intimately to waged work.

72. Love, “Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory,” 346, 345.

73. Gilmore, “Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning,” 36.

74. See Love, “How the Other Half Thinks,” in the collection *Imagining Queer Methods*, as well as Ghaziani and Brim, “Queer Methods: Four Provocations for an Emerging Field,” in that same volume.

75. Manalansan et al., “Queering the Middle,” 1.

76. Manalansan et al., “Queering the Middle,” 5.

77. Hartle and Nellum, “Where Have All the Low-Income Students Gone?” Other studies put the college attendance rate for children from poor families even lower, at 25–40 percent. See Chetty et al., “Where Is the Land of Opportunity?”

78. “76.1 percent of low-income students graduated on time in 2014, compared to 89.8 percent of non-low-income students (a 13.7 percentage point difference),” in “High School Graduation Facts: Ending the Dropout Crisis,” America’s Promise Alliance, June 5, 2018, <http://www.americaspromise.org/high-school-graduation-facts-ending-dropout-crisis>. Also see “Driver 1: Low-Income,” in *2015 Building a Grad Nation Report*, America’s Promise Alliance, October 4, 2016, <http://www.americaspromise.org/report/2015-building-grad-nation-report#driver-1-low-income>; and “Table 1. Public High School 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR),” Common Core of Data, NCES, 2016, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2014-15.asp.

79. Manalansan et al., “Queering the Middle,” 6.

80. Somerville, “Locating Queer Culture in the Big Ten.” I deeply appreciate Somerville’s kindness in emailing me a copy of this essay, and I want to recommend it as a readily adaptable model of pedagogical innovation.

81. Kramer and Flanigan, *Staten Island*. The late Professor Kramer retired from the college in 2000.

82. Wabash College would be an ideal object of analysis using Jane Ward's study *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*.

83. The college opened its first residence halls in 2014. Currently, 4 percent of all students live on campus. Also, trees were planted along the college's main walkways sometime around 2008.

One. The College of Staten Island

1. Brim, "Larry Mitchell," 11. Thanks to *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide* for its permission to reprint Larry's obituary here.

2. "Richmond College [an experimental, upper-division (junior/senior) college that would merge with Staten Island Community College in 1976 to become CSI] developed the first women's studies courses in CUNY, and in 1972 the college was one of only two schools on the East Coast that had a program leading to a degree in Women's Studies. The college was also willing to explore the creation of degree programs in new disciplines such as Computer Science, Puerto Rican–Latin American Studies, Afro-American Studies and Urban-Community Studies." See "A Guide to the Richmond College Records, 1963–1978," College of Staten Island Archives and Special Collections, http://163.238.8.180/finding_aids/CM-2.pdf.

3. A fortieth-anniversary facsimile edition of Mitchell and Asta's *The Faggots and Their Friends between Revolutions* was reprinted by Nightboat Press in 2019, with new essays by Morgan Bassichis and Tourmaline.

4. Two other pertinent, meaningful instances of following have helped me piece this project together. My graduate advisor, Susan Gubar, explored the changing field of women's and gender studies by writing a fictionalized, pseudo-Woolfian account of life in and around her home institution, Indiana University. *Rooms of Our Own* remains my favorite of Susan's many books, and by envisioning a field of study through a specific institutional setting, it provides a model for my own project. Second, in my sixth year at CSI, I discovered that my colleague in media culture, Cynthia Chris, and I were from the exact same place in Indiana, having lived for a time within a few miles of each other as children. As I followed Cynthia into the coeditorship of *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, a deeply collaborative role in which we worked together for three years, I was able to make further connections between the ways a sense of shared queer-class history informs my ability to imagine Queer Studies at CSI.

5. See the following Queer Studies field narratives and assessments: Valente, Merryman, and Blumenfeld, "25 Years On"; Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included*; Roderick Ferguson's *The Reorder of Things*; David Halperin's *How to Be Gay* and "The Normalization of Queer Theory"; Hawley, *Expanding the Circle*; Johnson and Henderson, *Black Queer Studies*; Johnson, *No Tea, No Shade*; Michael Warner's "Queer and Then?"; Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz, "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?"; and Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons*.

6. Hartman, "The Queer Utility of Narrative Case Studies," 233.

Ordinary, Incredulous

Judith Butler

We need to be more than objects of ruin.

—RANDY MARTIN

I have been reflecting on the question of how best to begin this essay on humanities in the public sphere because the terms are large: humanities, the public sphere, or, perhaps more specifically, public life. Yet the sense of the task is quite precise: We have been asked to establish the relation between the two, or to provide some guidelines on how that link might be demonstrated. One reason we are asked to do this is that the link has become unsure. Certainly one of my initial responses to this invitation was simply to declare that the connection is clear. After all, we need to be able to discern what is happening in that sphere called public, to attempt to establish events and their meanings, to evaluate what we think is going on, and even to formulate modes of engagement when they are required. Can any of this happen without the capacity to read texts and images, to understand how our world is formed, and to ask what forms we want for our world, and to give reasons for preferring those forms? It would seem that all of those most basic forms of public engagement demand an education in how to read, in history, in culture and media, in philosophy and argumentation. Of course, critical thinking is a further operation of thought, which involves not taking for granted what the public sphere is.

After all, that sphere has no permanently established borders, and the borders it does have are crafted in part of the exclusion of those who are to remain unpublic, shadowed, or private. And that is surely one good reason why political engagement may be an engagement in the public sphere—but also outside it and sometimes against it. So we need to know how that public sphere has been constituted, through what media and idioms, and how it has expanded and contracted in different ways, for what reasons, and to whose benefit and whose loss. We also have to be able to evaluate the changes in the public sphere that we track.

So to ask how the humanities engage that sphere, we have to be knowing about which version of the public is at issue, how and why it works as it does, and whether it really should. Many of us have made the case for the humanities by arguing that without cultural and even public literacy it is not possible to engage as a mindful citizen in civic and democratic processes, if not more far-reaching forms of democratic struggle. We have to be able to know how to read the newspaper or understand and evaluate images in television and film, on video, and on the kiosks of the street if we are to find our way with those parts of the world that present themselves to us commonly, which does not mean they present themselves to us all in the same way. If we are to understand ourselves as not only participating in that established public sphere but engaged in the very establishing of what counts as public, then an education of the senses is required. We have to be both receptive and critical to what should be known, heard, seen, and debated within the various idioms of public life, whether they are verbal or written, visual or acoustic, architectural or haptic and performative. In this way, an education of the senses is a precondition of what we might call a sensate democracy, one in which our capacity to hear and feel is not cut short by the media on which we depend to know that world. That happens when the sphere of what can be heard, the audible and the speakable, and what can be shown, the visual and the performative, and what can be touched or neared, the conditions of mobility, are limited by any number of constraining powers. The point is not to be perfectly free to hear, speak, and show everything, or to move everywhere, but rather to evaluate the implicit limits imposed upon the senses, to track their histories and their spatial organization, and to come up with critical judgments about how the world has been organized and how it might be organized better.

What is, of course, so increasingly difficult is that we are now under pressure to describe and defend a set of propositions and beliefs that we have taken to be true, and whose value informs our daily practices and

broader sense of vocation. Of course, the pressures are different whether we are at public or private institutions and depending on how elite our institutions are. But the burden is to show that engagement in public life is bound up from the start with the basics of a humanities education that address how we learn to think, to work with language and images, and to read, to make sense, to intervene, to take apart, to formulate evaluative judgments and even to make the world anew. These are such basic issues for educators that I find myself stumbling here. Must this be said, and what are the conditions under which it has become more difficult to speak and to be heard? A gap has emerged between this discourse, one that I would have thought was obvious, and a new metrics of value that is making, or has made, a claim on the obvious. Indeed, sometimes I find myself quite incredulous because I mistakenly thought the public value of these activities is so obvious that they hardly needed to be defended.¹

I trust we all know the basic parameters of the crisis, even though we shall probably hear different versions of what it is and how it came about. Public funding for the humanities and the arts are being cut, departments of French, Italian, Russian, theatre, classics, and philosophy have been cut, or whole language departments suddenly have been merged with one another in both the United States and the United Kingdom without regard for academic concerns. Derision is sometimes publicly directed to whole domains of knowledge, including ethnic studies and critical race studies (both of which have been declared illegal in the state of Arizona), and the public value of these activities has become rapidly less than obvious. I hesitate even to give you the list of all we need to worry about because, at least in this venue, I assume that you know it. But in addition to the highly publicized closing of the French department at the State University of New York at Albany and philosophy at Middlesex in the United Kingdom, numerous other universities within the United States have cut German, Latin, Italian, and French. In 2010, it was estimated that fifty-four language programs were imperiled.² Now many graduate programs that used to take ten to twelve students a year have been restricted to two or even none.³ History departments have also suffered a great deal, with clear implications for graduate education and placement. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* tells us that African history job openings fell 62 percent in 2010. Latin American history also took a large fall, down by 43 percent. The largest fields, as has been the case for years, were European and U.S. history, and even these fell by 34 and 28 percent, respectively.⁴

One can respond, "But there is a budget crisis," and either add the appellate "Stupid" or let it drift there, implied. And that has been, continues

to be, true. Yet, as we know, the demand to reduce a budget or to increase revenues involves decision-making processes that invariably rely on broader schemes of values. It provides an occasion to cut programs about which doubts are raised or for which no persuasive justification is available. So if the damage done to the humanities and the arts is disproportionate, as it surely seems to be, then the question follows: What sorts of values incline administrators to decide where and what to cut? If the skepticism about the humanities (which is hardly a singular form of skepticism) informs such decisions, how does one counter that?

It was surprising for me to read the very interesting and well-researched argument by Christopher Newfield that the humanities do not constitute a drain on university finances but actually bring in the tuition that helps to fund others schools and disciplines within the university.⁵ This is an interesting argument for many reasons, but perhaps most clearly because it is not always possible to establish the profitability of the discipline—its costs have to be factored through other means. But it also points to something else: Although we are clearly seeing an increasing demand to establish the profitability of disciplines, we are also seeing a new regime of values that certainly includes profitability as one component, but which includes as well “impact,” marketable skills, managerial efficiency, donor appeal, the appreciation of human capital, and the internal demands of systems analysis, all of which have been identified as hallmarks of neoliberalism.⁶ This set of values requires closer scrutiny as much for what it includes as for what it effaces and even pushes toward oblivion.

Pushing back against oblivion is part of my task, but I would like to prepare the way by returning to this problem of the obvious, a sense of obviousness both lost and transfigured. So here, first, is the question of when and where one register of the obvious falls away, and when and where another register comes to the fore. As I hope to suggest, understanding this kind of change may help us redirect our attention to the problem of the humanities in public life. But I will need to ask for patience as we find our way there, thus suggesting that patience remains one of the values in peril here.

If we are not sure how the humanities relate to public life, perhaps it will suffice to mark that gap between the two domains, claim that it is either a valuable difference or an inevitable one, or simply interrogate the contemporary limits of audibility within public life. Although such tactics might describe the hiatus in ways that prove interesting, they will not take us farther than a ratification of impasse nor will they precisely address our despair. One article I read about this topic asked, “How can we save that

which is already dead?”⁷ For that author, the fate of the humanities is tied to the fate of the university, and our energies would be better redirected toward saving the university. Though I do not deny the supervenient importance of such a task, it may be by focusing on what the humanities have to offer that we start to rethink the task of the university itself. At stake is an understanding of how the talk about a risk of death has come about, the pronouncements about a world already gone. To do this, we have to consider both the new metrics for determining value as well as the explicit forms of cultural warfare currently under way.

Although Rick Santorum exited the public arena early in the 2012 presidential race, his remarks certainly do linger and resonate in ways that remain cause for concern. They appeal to, and revel in, a thriving anti-intellectualism. His explanation for why his grades were poor at Pennsylvania State University was that his teachers were all leftists who punished him with poor grades on the basis of his political viewpoints.⁸ What Santorum and those who are stoked by that sensibility regularly do is misname intellectual inquiry as itself *ideological*, where ideology refers to an adamantly held and imposed political goal, viewpoint, or framework, rather than a considered and substantiated thesis. His reference to colleges and universities as “indoctrination mills” that convert students from religion to secularism is a case in point.

Because we are briefly making lists, I propose to include the banning of more than eighty novels and books from educational use in the state of Arizona, including Matt de la Peña’s *Mexican White Boy*, for containing “critical race theory,” which was perversely understood as “promoting racial resentment.”⁹ Such arguments reduce literary works (those of Sandra Cisneros included) to imagined political viewpoints, which suggests that those who make these arguments do not really know very much about narrative voice or character, that they do not want to bother with basic questions of genre and form, and that they assume that literary narratives are transcriptions of dogma. The charge of ideology in such cases is once again coupled with a virulent anti-intellectualism.

This is important because one could be against ideology in that sense and for a more properly intellectual approach to texts—but that would be the argument of the old conservatism (which, I confess, I sometimes think I would prefer to have as my antagonist). In these instances, a form of cultural warfare has now assumed legal dimensions in some states, and it is directly linked to the devaluation and distrust of the humanities. So let us hold both these thoughts together: The politically conservative attack supplements and fortifies the managerial or neoliberal calculus that is

becoming ever more dominant, but they are not, or are not always, the same trend.

Indeed, part of what has become confusing is that those who dismiss the value of the humanities often present themselves as innovators, ushering in a new age, fighting against recalcitrant and hermetic forces within the university. It is a moment, oddly, when the old-style conservatives find themselves joining with their erstwhile foes on the critical left. Those introducing some of these new metrics within public institutions of higher learning often champion new revenue enhancement schemes that will putatively save the university and they defend online education, insisting that a poetry class can be taught just as well over the Internet as around a seminar table. When some of us at the University of California at Berkeley objected to online education for such purposes, citing the importance of the practice of reading together and conducting discussions in direct reference to a text, working over the lines together, we found ourselves branded as conservative and “sentimental.” So, I wonder, what has happened such that I can feel myself to be conservative within this frame of reference? It seems that different groups are now warring over the “new” and that the term has now provisionally been captured by those who seek to produce Internet-based revenue-earning programs at the expense of close reading and *learning*.

As a consequence, I, vacillating between feeling like a crazy leftist and a conservative, find myself resisting this version of the “new,” noting that such proposals are slowly coming to monopolize terms such as “creative” as in “creative solutions” and even “the future.” I find myself wanting to stave off a loss, one that is too great for me to bear. I even sometimes think maybe I will be lucky enough to leave the earth before I have to see the full destruction of the humanities. I note, with fear, that there are those who are willing to give up funding for the arts as “luxury items,” or the humanities as a haven for leftists or as clearly useless. When the neoliberal matrix of valuation combines with the anti-intellectual conservatism, a double bind is upon us.¹⁰ One kind of critic claims that the humanities are less than hard and profitable science and so are without value, and the other claims that the humanities deflect from the truth of religion and so are a social danger. One says there is no real world impact, and the other claims that our values have to come from “out of the pale,” as it were—some anemic heavenly elsewhere that inscribes our values and our laws.

What I assume to be a common understanding seems increasingly elusive. The obvious should be that to which we merely need to point to recall to ourselves its status. Yet what happens when what we have considered

obvious becomes obscure, or when possibilities thought too obscure slowly become installed as obvious? It is not enough to be astonished or outraged because that does not translate into a way to reestablish a different sense of reality, a different register of the obvious. However, if we feel no astonishment or outrage, we have become inured to the attack itself, acquiescent or complicitous, effectively recruited into the project of accepting this new sense of the obvious, this sense of the obvious that now, eerily, lays claim to the new.

Of course, one can see that I am already on a certain theoretical terrain, for what does it mean that different versions of the obvious can be achieved or lost? It is not enough to say, for instance, that some version of the obvious has become dominant. If it is dominant, then there are rival understandings, however marginal, and so the version of reality we are discussing may be trying to achieve dominance but has not. The word *ideology* links with the problem of the obvious here. Of course, there are those who think that universities have become ideological and that the humanities are their ideological center; yet this position reflexively disqualifies itself, for its own position becomes an ideological attack on the humanities from the opposite side of the political spectrum, which is just a way of saying that it is all war. This view is finally unproductive if we seek to understand what is meant by ideology and whether it has a place in these debates.

Louis Althusser once sought to account for the ideological surface of things as “the obvious” and spent some time trying to fathom how the obvious gets established as such.¹¹ He was, of course, talking about the relationship between the State and the facts of oppression, and what emerges from this relationship is what he called “a very special kind of obviousness.”¹² Indeed, in his language, no one person or subject makes this happen, but the relationship between the State and its subjects gives rise to this special kind of obviousness as a feature of their rapport. He gives us the propositional form of this obviousness: “Yes, that’s how it is, that’s really true!”¹³ Our ability to grasp Althusser’s concept of ideology depends first on seeing how the one who utters these lines is related to the one who hears these lines. Because the voice appears in a written text, it follows that writing and reading become essential to a critical understanding of what he calls ideology; in fact, ideology is not just a system of thought, but constitutes us in relation to one another as the reading and writing subjects we are. Ideology does not induce our existence or cause us to be; rather, it emerges as a way of describing that web of relations that tethers authors and readers: In his words, “both live ‘spontaneously’ or ‘naturally’

in ideology.”¹⁴ So he describes the medium in which we live, one that is populated by readers and writers, but surely also by speakers and listeners—those appearing and seen, those moving or still in relation to others who are negotiating mobility as well. We live “in” ideology as we might live in a certain climate; indeed, it is a climate of historical belief with the proviso that it is not precisely *we* who manufacture and hold to a set of beliefs, but rather a set of beliefs breezes through us, animating the exchange of thought. So ideology is not precisely what a critic takes apart or gets beyond at a moment’s notice; it is rather more like an ethos in which we converge, if not the cultural surface that supports our gravity and mobility. This does not mean an ideology is always singular and cannot shift and change, as sometimes the obviousness on which it relies fissures, and that opening cannot be readily closed.

One might expect that the name of Althusser would be among those authors that Santorum is worried about (if, that is, it can be shown that Santorum knows about Althusser, which seems unlikely). Althusser might be required reading for the “indoctrination mill” that converts religious believers into secularists. My suggestion is that it turns out that belief is quite important to Althusser’s conception of ideology, as is the institution of the Church and its scriptures; in my view, it is not so easy to brand him a Marxist secularist because the form of belief he names ideological is not simply overcome or negated with a well-reasoned critique of its operation. Trying to explain this sense of obviousness that tethers us as readers and writers, Althusser sought recourse to Saint Paul. In his words, “As St Paul admirably put it, it is in the ‘Logos’, meaning in ideology, that we ‘live, move and have our being’.”¹⁵ Saint Paul is already describing ideology, and in that way making a contribution to Marxist theory *avant la lettre*. Immediately then, Althusser concludes, “It follows that, for you and for me, the category of the subject is a primary ‘obviousness’ (obviousnesses are always primary): it is clear that you and I are subjects (free, ethical, etc. . . .). Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word ‘name a thing’ or ‘have a meaning’ (therefore including the obviousness of the ‘transparency’ of language).” In some nonobvious, nonapparent way, what Althusser calls ideology imposes “obviousnesses as obviousnesses.”¹⁶ At this point, a rather nonobvious, if perfectly obscure, use of language seems to emerge, because we are not used to that plural noun form “obviousnesses.” I even worry about stating it out loud because it could easily be used as grist for the mill—not the indoctrination mill, but the one that seeks to grind up the humanities for having experimented with language in ways that seem obscure, if not frivolous.

Still, when something is being established as obvious to us through a process of some kind, it surely takes place in a nonobvious sort of way, if not in an utterly obscure one. Obscurity names the process by which the obvious is established. When something is being made less than obvious, obscurity emerges, but the terms are clearly relative. For Althusser, an obviousness is that which we “cannot fail to recognize”; and we, as subjects, are defined in part by what he calls the “ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life.”¹⁷ We have friends, he tells us, who knock on the door, and when we ask, “Who’s there?” they reply “It’s me,” and at that moment of exchange we recognize that person as the friend we know. With some reflection, we understand that all sorts of “mes” say “it’s me” when someone asks, “who’s there?,” and so it could be any number of “mes” who are in fact calling or knocking at that instant. Despite the non-singularity of my response, the singular me is sometimes recognized: “Oh, it’s you.” This happens between authors and writers, and between speakers and their audiences. Althusser then breaks out into reflexivity: “The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the ‘obviousness’ with which the ‘truth’ or ‘error’ of my reflections may impose itself on you.”¹⁸

Take this example from Franz Kafka’s “Description of a Struggle,” a story he wrote in 1904 and completed about five years later.¹⁹ He is writing, we might say, in a world or in a climate where certain kinds of obvious realities are vanishing or where their episodic reappearance is no less than astonishing. It is a story that includes a scene in which two men encounter each other in church, but neither of them is able quite to stand up or balance with ease. The one moves his leg as one would move a prosthesis, though he is not wearing one. The other seeks to balance himself in ways that can only produce imbalance. They lunge awkwardly at one another in vain attempts at communication. The one leans back impossibly, and the other bows down near the other in ways that are both potentially sexual and utterly uncomfortable. The first-person narrator notes that he is no longer able to walk in an upright way, that normal steps elude him. He asks, “Am I not rather entitled to complain bitterly at having to skip along the houses like a shadow without a clear outline, sometimes disappearing in the panes of the shopwindows?” He continues, “Oh, what dreadful days I have to live through! Why is everything so badly built that high houses collapse every now and again for no apparent reason? On these occasions I clamber over the rubble, asking everyone I meet: ‘How could this have happened?’ In our town—a new house—how many does that make

today?—Just think of it!’ And no one can give me an answer.”²⁰ So what should be established and built becomes undone with surprising speed, leaving in its wake a sense that the spatial and temporal coordinates of the world do not hold, or rather no longer hold, or rather never did.

What follows is a description of everyday life that has gone awry, where what is most obvious seems to become most obscure. The narrator continues, “Frequently people fall in the street and lie there dead. Whereupon all the shop people open their doors laden with wares, hurry busily out, cart the dead into a house, come out again all smiles, then the chatter begins: ‘Good Morning—it’s a dull day—I’m selling any amount of kerchiefs—ah yes, the war.’ I rush into the house, and after raising my hand several times timidly with my finger crooked, I finally knock on the janitor’s little window: ‘Good morning,’ I say, ‘I understand a dead man was carried in here just now.’” Then, after some pausing and a failed effort on the part of the narrator to pass himself off as secret police, the man replies, “‘There’s no dead man here. Maybe next door.’ I raise my hat and go.”²¹

After such a moment, the body does not hold together, and gravity is altogether lost. A sharp wind rises, and the narrator looks up at a church where “the Virgin Mary’s cloak is coiling around her pillar and the wind is tugging at it. Does no one notice this? The ladies and gentlemen who should be walking on the pavement are floating. When the wind falls they stand still, say a few words, and bow to one another, but when the wind rises again they are helpless, and all their feet leave the ground at the same time.”²² And then, in a transition that seems like a non sequitur, the listener replies, bringing us back to that vanishing sense of the obvious with which we are concerned. He recalls an earlier moment in their exchange where the narrator asks, “Why is it that around me things sink away like fallen snow, whereas for other people even a little liqueur glass stands on the table steady as a statue?” Then, “So, you don’t believe this happens to other people? You really don’t? Just listen, then. When as a child I opened my eyes after a brief afternoon nap, still not quite sure I was alive, I heard my mother up on the balcony asking in a natural tone of voice: ‘What are you doing my dear? Goodness, isn’t it hot?’ From the garden a woman answered, ‘Me, I’m having my tea on the lawn.’ They spoke casually and not very distinctly, as though this woman had expected the question, my mother the answer.”²³

“Me, I’m having my tea on the lawn”—the reply, a moment in which the woman simply refers to what she is doing and offers up that information to someone listening, certainly gives rise to a sense of obviousness,

surely analogous to “Who’s there?” “It’s me.” This very exchange, however, is cited within another conversation, and in that new conversation, the old conversation is cause for astonishment and doubt. Later in the story, after the description of the buildings falling and the dead bodies whisked away inside of shops where the shopkeepers deny their existence, this simple story about having tea on the lawn is recalled. The one listening replies, “‘That story you told me earlier about your mother and the woman in the garden I really don’t find so remarkable. Not only have I heard and experienced many stories of this kind, I have even taken part in some. The whole thing is perfectly natural. Do you really mean to suggest that had I been on that balcony in the summer, I could not have asked the same question and given the same answer from the garden? Quite an ordinary occurrence!’”²⁴ That last claim is only slightly belied by the exclamation mark by which it ends, suggesting that the ordinary emphatically seeks to counter a sense of the vanishing ordinary.

The whole exchange ends with the one who narrated the reported exchange between the mother and the woman in the garden feeling very much relieved, suddenly engaging in perfectly ordinary discourse, commenting on the other’s tie, how well dressed he is, as if the two are consecrating the ordinary. Like those who quickly forget that there were dead bodies on the street and now engage in small talk about the weather, the narrator clings to the daily discourse of chatter and compliments. Although the story was written in 1904, a decade before World War I, Kafka’s way of registering ineffable events such as these proved prescient. On August 2, 1914, he wrote in his diary, “Germany declares war on Russia—in the afternoon, swimming lessons.”²⁵

In the sudden recourse to the ordinary and obvious has something thereby been resolved, or has something just been covered over? The final line of that section then arrives: “confessions became most comprehensible when they were retracted.”²⁶ It is a paradoxical line, but perhaps not altogether confusing. After all, what is comprehensible is not precisely the ordinary exchange, the polite discourse, the everyday compliments; they cover over and defer a sense of the world that is losing its stability, pulled into oblivion. The wind that lifts those bodies up in the air, disrupts conversations, exposes the dead on the street, and unleashes fear might be understood as the particular climate of the obvious in which Kafka’s characters move and live. At one point when the pedestrians are lifted off the pavement, they hold onto their hats, and “‘their eyes twinkle gaily enough and no one has the slightest fault to find with the weather.’” The paragraph ends, “‘I’m the only one who’s afraid.’”²⁷

I noted earlier that we could mark the hiatus between the emerging metrics of value and those that belong to the humanities, but that would not be enough to redirect our actions or to remake the world. Yet this gap within the obvious that Kafka's writings opens up creates an ethical possibility. Exposing this very gap between what has become ordinary and the destructive aims it covers over and conveys, the reader is propelled into ethical responsiveness and alert. In Althusser, it seems that ideology names the effective functioning of the ordinary, in which when I knock, the "me" is then recognized—that is, when a simple act of saying what one is doing is received by another and understood. It is me, knocking at the door. Yes, you, glad to see you again. Me, I am having my tea on the lawn. There is a ground on which I might rest, a simple act of drinking, an ability to refer to myself and to say to you what it is I am doing. The basics of gravity, world, nourishment, and communication are intact for those brief episodes.

Yet Kafka's story queries the conditions under which the solidity of the world and the possibility of exchange have slipped away or are currently slipping. Kafka's texts tend to relay events in neutral and observational narrative voices (various "reports" and "investigations" refine the tenor of the bureaucratic voice). When scenes of outrage, destruction, and suffering are relayed through such a narrative voice, a gap opens between the mode of presentation and what is presented; the reader not only sees the outrage, but feels the ease with which outrage is normalized and covered over. A fissure emerges within the discourse of the obvious that shows the obscure workings of those modes of voice and discourse that cover over frightening and unacceptable destruction and loss. The narrative voice actually does the covering over of such outrages at the same time that it gives us the distance to respond to, and evaluate, that state of affairs.

As we read, we are brought into the mechanisms by which those dead bodies on the street are whisked away and the dissimulating function of daily chatter, and they prove to be unlivable. As we read those voices, as they depart from one another and converge again, we enact the ideological in Althusser's terms, but we also are given reason for alarm, and we cannot turn away from what has just been shown. The point is not to engender shock and outrage without any further recourse to action. Rather, we are compelled to understand the loss of communication as the new obvious, the sudden vanishing of the image of suffering; the cover up through a neutralized and cheery discourse of devastations induces incredulity—is incredible, if not incredulous—exceeding the syntax that keeps it in place: the ordinary incredulous. The writing steeps us in the process of making

and unmaking a world, which is not to say that the world is made through writing.

One could be tempted simply to say that we must gather the strength to defend the obvious. Alain Badiou does this when he cites Wallace Stevens's poem "Man Carrying Thing": "the bright obvious will stand motionless."²⁸ I am less convinced that the line from Stevens is without irony, but I can see why those who wish to retrench Plato would read it as Badiou does. My suggestion is that if Kafka can be read together with Althusser, one place where the obvious and its unraveling occurs is in reading and writing, in all the modes of exchange, visual, oral, and haptic, in which we are relatively tethered to one another. To rethink the problem of the ideological in Kafka's terms, we might begin by asking whether the very basic propositions about speaking and listening, reading and writing, showing and seeing, have become undone, unleashing astonishment and fear, alerting us as well to what has been destroyed, what might yet be destroyed, and what it would mean to preserve and reanimate what is most valuable.

In the final section of this essay, then, let me consider some of the salient forms that the defense of the humanities has taken and elaborate on what I think of as the ethical task before us, one that is, in my view, indissociable from forms of critical judgment and what we might aptly call the struggle against oblivion. My point will not be that we need to refine our skills of critical dismantling, but rather I wish to link our critical practice to an ethical consideration of the forms of cultural aliveness and destruction for which we are compelled to struggle because they are linked with public questions of what is of value, and what should be.

In the past few years, I have heard and read several kinds of arguments about how best to defend the humanities. Here is a brief list: the humanities have intrinsic value; the humanities are useless, and that is their value; public intellectuals exemplify the value of the humanities for public life; the humanities offer certain kinds of skill development that are important for economic mobility; the humanities offer certain kinds of literacy that are indispensable to citizenship; and finally, the humanities offer a critical perspective on values that can actively engage the contemporary metrics of value by which the humanities themselves are weakened, if not destroyed.

Some of my colleagues claim that the humanities must be recognized for having the "intrinsic value" that they have. Of course, the problem emerges that others do not recognize that intrinsic value—at which point, the intrinsic value must be demonstrated. If it must be demonstrated, it

has to be demonstrated within a language and an idiom that can be recognized by those who most clearly need to be convinced of that value. And that language is, increasingly, one that cannot recognize the value of the humanities, or can recognize it only with difficulty, because the kinds of values recognized by such a language, that are registered in that language, are those that cover over or consign to oblivion the value of the humanities.

The defense of intrinsic value has a close cousin in the position that the humanities are useless and should be defended as useless. For some, the humanities are themselves based on a critique of instrumentality, and they form the institutional venue for the critique of utility, functionalism, and instrumentality more generally. Theodor Adorno, for instance, had this to say about poetry: “The lyric reveals itself to be most deeply grounded in society when it does not chime in with society, *when it communicates nothing*.”²⁹ For Adorno, to communicate nothing is precisely to refuse the structures of communication that ratify society, and so the most “critical” potential of the lyric is expressed when communication is refused. For Kafka, the loss of communication is minimally twofold: Its loss is mourned at the same time that its capacity to consign matters of life and death to oblivion, horrifying, sounds an ethical alarm.

Yet others point to the idea of the public intellectual or to examples of public intellectuals, or find in literary works examples of virtuous people or citizens we should try to emulate. In my view, in thinking about the humanities and the public sphere, we need to move beyond the idea of the public intellectual to a broader reflection on the humanities in the public sphere.³⁰ The time for showcasing exemplary public intellectuals is probably gone—although some administrators and grant officers are eager to fund “leadership” proposals that allow exemplary individuals to be separated off and rewarded at the expense of funding institutional infrastructures or supplementing fellowships for students with limited financial means.

Another claim is that we must develop skills in our students that can be demonstrated to be useful for economic life or indispensable for public life and citizenship, more specifically. If we produce or instill skills, then we can show how skills can be used and implemented, which gives us recourse to a practical dimension. Strong defenders of the humanities take some version of this position. Geoffrey Harpham, for instance, writes that “we cannot simply insist that knowledge is only worthy of the name if it is pursued for its own sake, and that liberal education is contaminated when subjected to utilitarian justifications.”³¹ That seems to imply that we

must adapt what we do to contemporary measures of instrumentality, or that we must find some way of translating between what we do and those particular metrics of value. In any case, we cannot afford to continue to understand our vocation as a form of purity.

I agree that the arguments of intrinsic value or uselessness do not suffice (though some of my heartstrings, I confess, are pulled by both). But still, we have to ask: If the humanities are to make a difference in public life, does that mean we have to say that they are instrumental to some other social good? Is instrumentality the only way we have of thinking about what it means to make a difference? Indeed, we are faced with new metrics and standards of evaluation, and some of them are rather disorienting for those who have worked for a lifetime within the humanities. Interestingly, not all ways of “making a difference” count as having a calculable impact, according to these new metrics. A colleague in the United Kingdom proposed a conference for funding from their Arts and Humanities Research Council that would focus on the various meanings of monarchy for European countries at the present time. The proposal was rejected, and the reason given was that it failed to demonstrate “impact.” When she queried what “impact” might mean for such a conference, the grant administrators said that she would have to show that the findings of any such conference would be applicable to contemporary policy; indeed, their Web site explicitly states that “impact” refers to the “demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy,” and adds that “contribution” can be gauged by demonstrating how the knowledge generated can be “transferred” to individuals and communities outside of the academy. Her response was to suggest that the conference might help bring about the downfall of the monarchy, but her potential funders were not amused, and the project failed. Yet what other result would have fulfilled their requirement? Oddly, for her to have provided impact under such a circumstance would have immediately made her available for another sort of criticism, namely, that scholarship has been skewed by ideological aims, especially of the left-wing sort that are regularly associated with the humanities both in the United Kingdom and the United States—without, I would add, good grounds for doing so.

Of course, I want to say, and do say, that the humanities matter. But as soon as we say that, we have to show what we mean by mattering, and that is where we get into a set of disagreements that are both difficult and invaluable. If we take Harpham’s point to mean that we have to adopt instrumentality as the measure of value, then we have accepted that particular scheme of evaluation as the most relevant and appropriate. But I think

what he is claiming is that we cannot avoid considerations of instrumentality altogether. Here is the bind: We may well think that we must conform to the standards implied by the demands themselves in order to offer a satisfactory answer and receive the funding we need, whether those are internal allocations, revenue from investments, government grants, the largesse of private donors, or the budget lines from state assemblies if we are in public institutions. Yet if we comply too well—that is, too perfectly—we run the risk of forfeiting one of the most important tasks of the humanities, namely, to think critically about modes of measurement and schemes of evaluation in order to figure out which ones are justified, which ones really suit their objects, and which ones are introduced and maintained by the scholarship and teaching in the humanities. This process of thinking critically involves reading closely the various public documents that are deciding our fate while also exercising a particular kind of judgment as we read. As I hope to suggest, this exercise of critical judgment also establishes an important link between the humanities and public life.

We also could call this the critical problem of value. If there are competing ways of measuring value or making evaluations—some of which argue explicitly that value cannot be measured, or minimally that not all kinds of value can be measured—then how do we begin to adjudicate that situation? The humanities are under pressure to demonstrate their value under historical conditions in which competing schemes of valuation are brought to bear upon the humanities. We can simply conform to the ones that look most lucrative, at which point we may well be able to fund the humanities, until it becomes clear that we do not actually do what we said we were going to do in order to get the funding we need. “We have funding for the humanities! The humanities are lost.” But even if we decide that, tactically, that is the only way to go, we compel the humanities to conform to models that misrecognize or even efface their value, at which point we have to ask what we are actually funding, and at what cost, and how it relates to the ideal we want to preserve and animate.

Critical judgment implies an investigation of the problem of value, something that is a problem precisely because values are plural and do not always complement one another. In the second instance, that form of critical judgment implies finding ways to evaluate disparate schemes of valuation, that is, asking about which schemes are best for the humanities and how might we demonstrate that persuasively. When ideas of instrumentality, impact, skill building, and revenue enhancement become the

dominant modes of evaluation, then certain managerial, financial, and more broadly neoliberal modes of valuation gain ascendancy. It then remains for some group of interested educators to query whether those schemes are finally sufficient, and whether the humanities can even successfully make a case for itself in the terms required by those schemes. One could become a realist under such conditions and argue that we have no other choice: We must make those arguments and in those terms. Or one could become a purist and say that we will never make those arguments within those terms. But no matter which way we go, we are still left with a problem of knowledge that needs to be foregrounded and safeguarded, namely, the very practice of asking about *the value* of these values, whether they are comprehensive, what they facilitate, what they foreclose, what kind of world they establish, and what kind of world they destroy.

How does this issue of critical judgment bring us to the question of how the humanities link up with public life—more particularly, the relation between the humanities and citizenship or, more broadly, the forms of democratic engagement? The meaning of citizenship, if it is to be valuable for our purposes, must describe a set of practices that can be undertaken by the documented and the undocumented. So citizenship has to belong to those who are not legally stipulated as citizens. Citizenship is thus a topic for public debate, which means that established stipulations on citizenship cannot be equated from the public sphere. Indeed, the public sphere can be a place where the noncitizen feels endangered or exercises rights that are not guaranteed by any existing form of citizenship. Sequestered within the public sphere, the undocumented expose the limits of using citizenship to define the public.

We can begin with some of the prerogatives of citizenship to find our way into this larger question. We have reason to doubt whether democracy is possible at all without an educated public, and to wonder what forms of education are necessary for democracy to work. Here it seems important to note, as Wendy Brown has argued, that as public and affordable higher education becomes out of reach for the poor and the working class, new class hierarchies emerge such that the monied not only get more education but also gain access to more prestigious institutions and greater upward mobility, protecting their already upward trajectory.³² Although this surely counts as an “instrumental” argument for increasing educational opportunities for those who cannot afford them, there is another argument that is implicit in this one. Brown remarks that citizens have to

deliberate on how best to make a world together, and this requires that they are able to reflect on how they themselves have been formed, especially on the political formations that have brought them to where they are, to the views they hold. They also need to be able deliberate together on how best to organize their world, and this means working together on the question of where to find or make ideals, how best to evaluate them, and how to make a world that might either realize those ideals or keep them alive as possibilities. Dana Villa said something similar in his book, *Socratic Citizenship*, when, drawing on Arendt and Socrates, he argued that only through a common reflection on the world do we begin to exercise judgment as individuals who are bound with others.³³

As you can see, the living scene of the seminar, or reading and writing and disputation, is in some ways related to the practice of citizenship, often a conflicted process that requires forms of interpretation, deliberation, and the setting forth of ideals. But it can also be that the practice of interpretation leads us to say no to an entire regime, to refuse it, to counter it, and to demand a new way of ordering the world. The analogy with citizenship breaks down, however, when we consider that sometimes reading can take us to an insight into the necessary limits of a regime, especially when we see the losses it induces and refuses to mourn. This might imply undoing forms of public engagement that exceed the existing forms of citizenship, or even calling for their remaking. And when we arrive there, or when we defend that practice of calling into question whether a regime should continue as it is, we are exercising a form of judgment that is precisely not valorized by the regime itself. This form of evaluating is not just about bringing something down because it is unjust or because its consequences are destructive in ways that cannot be ethically abided, it is a bringing down and bringing forth; it is thus the condition, we might say, of both revolution and critical judgment.

The point is not only to reflect on the history that makes our present world possible, or the various forms that bespeak and ratify our contemporary modes of valuation, but to figure out in common what we make of it and what we want to make of it. If we are presented with a debate, for instance, in which we have to show that the humanities can have a larger impact or that the humanities can be profitable, and we are asked to choose between them, this is surely a moment for pausing, refusing, and offering another perspective. Socially and politically, we are in a bind because the imperative to “save” the humanities often propels us into states of urgency in which we imagine that the only future left to us will be one secured

precisely through those metrics of value that are most in need of critical re-evaluation. Oddly, our very capacity for critically re-evaluating is what cannot be measured by the metrics by which the humanities are increasingly judged. This means that the resource we need to save the humanities is precisely one that has been abandoned by the metrics that promise to save the humanities if only we comply. So perhaps we must retrieve from the threat of oblivion those ways of valuing that can put into perspective the closing of the horizons enacted by the metrics we are asked to use. These are metrics of forgetfulness, perhaps, or metrics of effacement, conduits to oblivion, where the calculus emerges as the final arbiter of value, which means that the values we have to defend are already lost. This does not mean that we become conservative, endeavoring to reinstate a former time; rather, we must move forward in new ways, through new idioms, and with some impurity, to reanimate the very ideals that guide and justify our work.

Here, one can see how easy it is to resolve upon mourning or to rise up in impotent outrage and refuse to go gently into that dark night. But is there a politics that fights against the pull of oblivion? Let me end with an example that perhaps makes my point in a way that I hope will not prove to be too obscure. But if obscurity is sometimes the necessary corrective to what has become obvious, so be it.

I was asked to help devise a proposal to have an institute funded that would be, ironically, dedicated to the problem of values. One of the grant administrators let me know that I would have to be able to show “the deliverable.” I asked whether this was really a word, and she replied that it surely was, and offered me a definition from a Web site called *Investopedia*.³⁴ Here is that definition:

Deliverable: “a project management term for the quantifiable goods or services that will be provided upon completion of a project. Deliverables can be tangible or intangible parts of the developmental process, and are often specified functions or characteristics of the project.”

The Web site, by way of offering a further explanation, continued:

Deliverables serves as a general term that encompasses the requirements of a project. A deliverable may be an object, used in the greater scheme of the project. For example, in a project meant to upgrade a firm’s technology, a deliverable may be a dozen new computers. Alternatively, a deliverable may be a function or an aspect of the overall project. For example, a software project may have a deliverable specifying that the

computer program must be able to compute a company's accounts receivable.

Actually, the question posed to me did not distinguish between singular and plural forms of the deliverable. It was simply "What is the deliverable of your proposal?" As I scrutinized the word, I thought first that a deliverable must be different from a delivery, or something that can be delivered, such as a package or a gift, a kiss, a legal summons, or a swift punch to the jaw. The deliverable seemed to be a noun form that seeks to make a concrete thing out of the very possibility of a delivery. In other words, the term seemed to refer to what *can* be delivered, what it is possible to deliver. For me, this immediately brought up questions of theology and semiotics alike, though I can imagine also situations of love and bribery that center on the idea of what can be delivered. There is surely a question of whether, for instance, God's word has been delivered, can be delivered, will ever yet be delivered. There is also a question about human communication: Is it possible to send a letter that will be delivered, and delivered in a sense that means that the letter arrives at its destination and is received or read? (This is the problematic of Kafka's "An Imperial Message.") The delivery of a letter or the delivery of God's word both seem to depend on a form of communication that works, that is, where what is sent and what is delivered turn out to be the same, or, at least, where what is sent can become what is delivered through some set of relays, technologies, transpositions, or translations.

It interests me that the *Investopedia* clarification of the term distinguishes between tangible and intangible forms of the deliverable. I find myself eagerly anticipating the intangible. But when it then gives examples of the two, the tangible seems to be "new computers" and the intangible seems to be "the ability to compute a company's accounts receivable." The line that seeks to explain the deliverable ends with the word "receivable," at which point my attention as a literary reader started to flare. We do talk about "receivables" when we talk about accounts, and in some way the receivable is implied by the deliverable. If we do not deliver, we will not receive. But even that formulation does not quite capture what is at play, because the term is concerned less with what *is delivered* than with what *can be delivered*, and what *can be received*. These are potentialities of a process, and they are given a noun form.

There is an odd resonance with what some of us do. When I pose a question, after reading Kafka, for instance, such as "whose lives are grievable and whose lives are recognizable under conditions of war?," an editor

usually comes back to me with the suggestion that I simply ask whose lives are worthy of grief, and whose lives can be recognized. I balk a little because I want to draw attention to a quality that gets lost in that simpler formulation. I want to say that sometimes people seem to be endowed with a certain value, that is, their lives are regarded as valuable and they assume a certain form and bearing under that regard. Great efforts are made to protect and defend those lives, and yet in other instances, lives are regarded as disposable or are so stripped of value that when they are imperiled, injured, or lost, they assume a social ontology that is partially constituted by that regard. Hence, they are not cause for worry; their potential loss is no occasion to mourn. Someone who never existed has been nullified, so nothing has happened. The “grievable” postulates a future conditional, a perspective from the future; indeed, to be grievable is a precondition of being valuable in the present: If there were a war or a disaster, some populations would be designated as worthy of grief whereas others would not. As a way of conjecturing, even fictionalizing, that adjectival noun seeks to bring to bear the ethical relation to a future loss on the thinking of the present. I suppose the conjectured temporality implied by such a noun-adjective is not unlike the way that utopian fictions sometimes establish an imaginary future perspective from which critical light can be shed on the inequalities and injustices of the contemporary organization of society. It is also necessary for what Ernst Bloch once called the principle of hope.³⁵

I mean to say that a certain group of people considered grievable could be mourned if they were lost, and so carry that quality in the present; in contrast, the ungrievable bear the mark of those who will never be mourned because they were never understood to be living. So what does this have to do with the deliverable? When am I going to deliver? Is this essay finally deliverable? We might ask of the deliverable: Does it also sustain a relation to the future and, if so, what kind? If something is a deliverable, it does not have to be actually delivered to sustain that quality. It has only to be an object or a function or an aspect of a project that could be delivered, if certain conditions were to be met. Indeed, in the context of the grant application, the deliverable can become the delivered only on the condition that the project is funded and then executed.

If “receivable” belongs to the world of accounts, then the deliverable belongs to the prior world in which the receivable is anticipated. These are aspects of a process and a project, and certain questions cannot rightly be asked of this framework: who delivers, what do they deliver, and who receives, if anyone does? What is undeliverable, or deemed undeliverable by this process? In other words, who loses, and what is lost?

Such terms contain a futural or even transcendent function, and perhaps we can read them as recirculating in fugitive forms the traces or remnants of a theology and a semiotics that belong precisely to the domain that is no longer recognizable within their terms. For the deliverable is the possibility opened up by the project, a way of organizing and regulating time, constraining the future. After all, the deliverable refers to the general conditions of delivery, and so is something that transcends every particular delivery, every particular package, every particular fund that is actually received in any particular account in payment for what is delivered. Perhaps the deliverable is thus the ruin and remnant of Platonism; perhaps, it is the perversely animated trace of transcendence, a new obviousness that carries and condenses the no longer translatable form of the humanities within a single word, adding insult to injury by virtue of being a very bad kind of poetry. It puts out of play any question of what can be received or should be received, any question of who stands to receive or who stands to lose, questions that pertain to distributive justice; it sets aside questions of what values it preempts, and what values it installs as the new obvious.

Perhaps this strangely condensed noun gives off a peculiar illumination that belongs to our time, opening a future that is bound precisely through a discourse that consigns to oblivion some of the questions that are most valuable. The deliverable might be said to displace and efface the history of value that it is meant to gauge. In this way, we can perhaps conclude that the deliverable produces the ungrievable, absorbing and renaming the trace of loss so that we are no longer able to stay with the thought of those bodies on the street or more broadly the question of what we undergo, whether it is just, and what new forms of life we have yet to make.

So if we return to where we began, with the question of how practitioners of the humanities can be more than or other than the objects of ruin, we now have a slightly different path. We find ourselves housed and displaced within language with metrics of value that not only cannot gauge well what we do, but have so monopolized the field of value that they threaten to consign what we do to oblivion. What can those whose language is consigned to oblivion do? They can reenter the fray, open up the space between the language that has become obvious or self-evident and the enormous loss it has already accomplished and still portends. That gap is the advent of an ethical relation not only to the past and the future but to the possibility of incredulity and astonishment when the value of the new regime of values has yet to be evaluated. This means that we ex-

ercise critical judgment in the breach, reentering the obscure into the obvious in order to affirm what is left between us still to lose, to keep, to keep animated. In this way, we militate for a sphere of audibility within which to pose our question and have it heard: What now is the value of our values?

10. Wallace Stevens, “Notes toward a Supreme Fiction,” in *Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1961), 383.

ORDINARY, INCREDULOUS

1. The National Humanities Alliance, in opposing the cuts to the National Endowment for the Humanities, takes the tack that one needs to restate the obvious: “The public value of the humanities is unquestioned. They enrich individual lives, they bring communities together, they underpin our civic institutions, they bring forth our history and our shared values, they make possible how our heritage is understood and preserved, and they support a broadly educated and competitive workforce.” Michael Brintnall, President, National Humanities Alliance, House Congressional Testimony FY 2012 National Endowment for the Humanities, Public Witness Testimony Submitted to the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, April 2012, www.nhalliance.org/advocacy/testimony/congressional-testimony-fy-2012-neh.shtml.

2. Lisa Foderaro, “Budget-Cutting Colleges Bid Some Languages Adieu,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2010.

3. Scott Jaschik, “Job Freefall, Job Recovery,” *Inside Higher Education*, January 3, 2011.

4. Peter Schmidt, “Historians Continue to Face Tough Job Market,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 3, 2011.

5. Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008): 208–219.

6. See Michel Feher, “Self-Appreciation; or, the Aspirations of Human Capital,” *Public Culture* 21 (2009): 21; Wendy Brown, “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” *Theory & Event* 7 (2003).

7. See Michelle Ty, “Higher Education on Its Knees,” Introduction to the Fall/Winter issue of *Qui Parle* 20, no. 1 (2011): 3–32.

8. In Santorum’s words, he was for his instructors “out of the pale”—a fine expression that combines, I surmise, “beyond the pale” with “out of the blue” or “out of the mainstream” and which suggests that he was regarded as outside the realm of the recognizable or that he had descended on that campus from a faraway planet or from the more unsavory recesses of whiteness. I do not think of the Nitney Lions huddled with a strong cohort of Heideggerians as a left-wing outpost, but perhaps that is to mistake the garbled syntax of a fantasy structure for a reasonable report on reality.

9. See Librotraficante.com for information on the Arizona law and its impact.

10. Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 690–714.
11. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–93.
12. *Ibid.*, 139.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 171.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 171–172
17. *Ibid.*, 172.
18. *Ibid.*, 173.
19. Franz Kafka, "Description of a Struggle," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 9–51.
20. *Ibid.*, 35.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, 36.
23. *Ibid.*, 34.
24. *Ibid.*, 36.
25. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1914–23*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1949), 75.
26. Kafka, "Description," 36.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See Alain Badiou, "Philosophy as Creative Repetition," in *The Symptom* 8 (2009): "Stevens writes: 'We must endure our thoughts all night.' Alas! That is the destiny of philosophers and philosophy. And Stevens continues: 'Until the bright obvious stands motionless in cold.' Yes, we hope, we believe that one day the 'bright obvious' will 'stand motionless.'" I would add the following: For Stevens, it is unclear whether the time when the bright obvious will stand motionless is realizable, although it remains the ideal toward which those who endure their thoughts nevertheless move. If it proves unrealizable, endurance itself is the ultimate.
29. Theodor W. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958/1991), 1:43 (*italics added*).
30. As Randy Martin queries, "How might the humanities turn its own interpretive prowess, which has been developed through a critique of representation in textual forms, to public matters whose value and impact remains still very hard to discern?" in "Taking an Administrative Turn: Derivative Logics for a Recharged Humanities" *Representations* 116 (2011): 170.

31. Geoffrey Harpham, “From Eternity to Here: Shrinkage in American Thinking About Higher Education,” *Representations* 116, no. 1 (2011): 57.
32. Wendy Brown, “The End of Educated Democracy,” *Representations* 116, no. 1 (2011): 19–41.
33. Dana Villa, *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
34. See the “Dictionary” subheading at www.investopedia.com.
35. Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice et al. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

POETRY, INJURY, AND THE ETHICS OF READING

1. Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 2011). I have just summarized Pinker’s argument in a much more conservative or modest form than Pinker himself does because I am more certain of its truthfulness in that form. Although his overall argument about the greatly diminished rate of violence does *not* persuade me, certainly his documentation of the many *specific* forms of cruelty that have subsided *does* persuade me. I regard the book as a magnificent achievement on many grounds: the importance of its subject, the ambition of its research and documentation, the eloquent formulation of both historical events and philosophic arguments, and the patience and lucidity of its inquiry. Nevertheless, from my perspective, the book has major substantive misjudgments (most importantly, his belief that use of nuclear weapons is now taboo when in fact it is only public discussion of our ever-ready nuclear arsenal that is taboo) and misleading stylistic habits (such as acknowledging that a given harm occurs at both the outset and the close of a given era—whether millennia, century, or decade—but then using vivid images and numbers only at the terminus that is far away from us and an abstract word at the close-by terminus).

2. Ibid., 173, figure 4–9.
3. Ibid., 173.
4. Ibid., 175, 176, describing Lynn Hunt, *The Invention of Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 38–69.
5. Pinker, *Better Angels*, 174.
6. On the difference between legal and literary approaches to injury, see Elaine Scarry, “Das SchwierigeBild der Anderen,” in *SchwierigeFremdheit: Über Integration und Ausgrenzung in Einwanderungsländern*, ed. R. Habermas, P. Nanz, and F. Balke (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1993), 229–264. The English version, “The Difficulty of Imagining Other People,” can be found in *Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, ed. Eugene Weiner (New York: Abraham Fund, 1998); and in *Human Rights and Historical Contingency*, ed.

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Philosophy thus traditionally practices a critique of knowledge which is simultaneously a denegation of knowledge (i.e., of the class struggle). Its position can be described as an *irony* with regard to knowledge, which it puts into question without ever touching its foundations. The questioning of knowledge in philosophy always ends in its restoration: a movement great philosophers consistently expose in each other.

—Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*

I am a black man number one, because I am against what they have done and are still doing to us; and number two, I have something to say about the new society to be built because I have a tremendous part in that which they have sought to discredit.

—C. L. R. James, *C. L. R. James: His Life and Work*

The Only Possible Relationship to the University Today Is a Criminal One

“To the university I’ll steal, and there I’ll steal,” to borrow from Pistol at the end of *Henry V*, as he would surely borrow from us. This is the only possible relationship to the American university today. This may be true of universities everywhere. It may have to be true of the university in general. But certainly, this much is true in the United States: it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of—this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.

Worry about the university. This is the injunction today in the United States, one with a long history. Call for its restoration like Harold Bloom or Stanley Fish or Gerald Graff. Call for its reform like Derek Bok or Bill Readings or Cary Nelson. Call out to it as it calls to you. But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it

is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the Undercommons of Enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.

What is that work and what is its social capacity for both reproducing the university and producing fugitivity? If one were to say teaching, one would be performing the work of the university. Teaching is merely a profession and an operation of what Jacques Derrida calls the onto-/auto-encyclopedia circle of the *Universitas*. But it is useful to invoke this operation to glimpse the hole in the fence where labor enters, to glimpse its hiring hall, its night quarters. The university needs teaching labor, despite itself, or as itself, self-identical with and thereby erased by it. It is not teaching then that holds this social capacity, but something that produces the not visible other side of teaching, a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project, and a commitment to what we want to call the prophetic organization.

But it is teaching that brings us in. Before there are grants, research, conferences, books, and journals there is the experience of being taught and of teaching. Before the research post with no teaching, before the graduate students to mark the exams, before the string of sabbaticals, before the permanent reduction in teaching load, the appointment to run the Center, the consignment of pedagogy to a discipline called education, before the course designed to be a new book, teaching happened. The moment of teaching for food is therefore often mistakenly taken to be a stage, as if eventually, one should not teach for food. If the stage persists, there is a social pathology in the university. But if the teaching is successfully passed on, the stage is surpassed, and teaching is consigned to those who are known to remain in the stage, the sociopathological labor of the university. Kant interestingly calls such a stage “self-incurred minority.” He tries to contrast it with having the “determination and courage to use one’s intelligence without being guided by another.” “Have the courage to use your own intelligence.” *But what would it mean if teaching or rather what we might call “the beyond of teaching” is precisely what one is asked to get beyond, to stop taking sustenance?* And what of those minorities who refuse, the tribe of moles who will not come back from beyond₂ (that which is beyond “the beyond of teaching”), as if they will not be subjects, as if they want to think as objects, as minority? Certainly, the perfect subjects of communication, those successfully beyond teaching, will see them as waste. But their collective labor will always call into question who truly is taking the orders of the Enlightenment. The waste lives for those moments

beyond₂ teaching when you give away the unexpected beautiful phrase—unexpected, no one has asked, beautiful, it will never come back. Is being the biopower of the Enlightenment truly better than this?

Perhaps the biopower of the Enlightenment know this, or perhaps it is just reacting to the objecthood of this labor as it must. But even as it depends on these moles, these refugees, they will call them uncollegial, impractical, naive, unprofessional. And one may be given one last chance to be pragmatic—why steal when one can have it all, they will ask. But if one hides from this interpellation, neither agrees nor disagrees but goes with hands full into the underground of the university, into the *Undercommons*—this will be regarded as theft, as a criminal act. And it is at the same time, the only possible act.

In that Undercommons of the university one can see that it is not a matter of teaching versus research or even the beyond of teaching versus the individualization of research. To enter this space is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the stroll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons. What the beyond₂ of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing; it's about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood, and one cannot initiate the auto-interpellative torque that biopower subjection requires and rewards. It is not so much the teaching as it is the prophecy in the organization of the act of teaching. The prophecy that predicts its own organization and has therefore passed, as commons, and the prophecy that exceeds its own organization and therefore as yet can only be organized. Against the prophetic organization of the Undercommons is arrayed its own deadening labor for the university, and beyond that, the negligence of professionalization, and the professionalization of the critical academic. The Undercommons is therefore always an unsafe neighborhood.

Fredric Jameson reminds the university of its dependence on “Enlightenment-type critiques and demystification of belief and committed ideology, in order to clear the ground for unobstructed planning and ‘development.’”¹ This is the weakness of the university, the lapse in its homeland security. It needs labor power for this “enlightenment-type critique,” but, somehow, labor always escapes.

The premature subjects of the Undercommons took the call seriously, or had to be serious about the call. They were not clear about planning, too mystical, too full of belief. And yet this labor force cannot reproduce itself,

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it must be reproduced. The university works for the day when it will be able to rid itself, like capital in general, of the trouble of labor. It will then be able to reproduce a labor force that understands itself as not only unnecessary but dangerous to the development of capitalism. Much pedagogy and scholarship is already dedicated in this direction. Students must come to see themselves as the problem, which, counter to the complaining of restorationist critics of the university, is precisely what it means to be a customer, to take on the burden of realization and always necessarily be inadequate to it. Later, these students will be able to see themselves properly as obstacles to society, or perhaps, with lifelong learning, students will return having successfully diagnosed themselves as the problem.

Still, the dream of an undifferentiated labor that knows itself as superfluous is interrupted precisely by the labor of clearing away the burning roadblocks of ideology. While it is better that this police function be in the hands of the few, it still raises labor as difference, labor as the development of other labor, and therefore labor as a source of wealth. And although the enlightenment-type critique, as we suggest below, informs on, kisses the cheek of, any autonomous development as a result of this difference in labor, there is a break in the wall here, a shallow place in the river, a place to land under the rocks. The university still needs this clandestine labor to prepare this undifferentiated labor force, whose increasing specialization and managerialist tendencies, again contra the restorationists, represent precisely the successful integration of the division of labor with the universe of exchange that commands restorationist loyalty.

Introducing this labor upon labor, and providing the space for its development, creates risks. Like the colonial police force recruited unwittingly from guerrilla neighborhoods, university labor may harbor refugees, fugitives, renegades, and castaways. But there are good reasons for the university to be confident that such elements will be exposed or forced underground. Precautions have been taken, book lists have been drawn up, teaching observations conducted, invitations to contribute made. Yet against these precautions stands the immanence of transcendence, the necessary deregulation and the possibilities of criminality and fugitivity that labor upon labor requires. Maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments, closed-down film programs, visa-expired Yemeni student newspaper editors, historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional. This is not an arbitrary charge. It is the charge against the more than professional. How do those who exceed the profession, who exceed and by exceeding escape, how do those maroons problematize themselves, problematize the

university, force the university to consider them a problem, a danger? The Undercommons is not, in short, the kind of fanciful communities of whimsy invoked by Bill Readings at the end of his book. The Undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding.

There Is No Distinction between the American University and Professionalization

But surely if one can write something on the surface of the university, if one can write for instance in the university about *singularities*—those events that refuse either the abstract or individual category of the bourgeois subject—one cannot say that there is no space in the university itself? Surely there is some space here for a theory, a conference, a book, a school of thought? Surely the university also makes thought possible? Is not the purpose of the university as *Universitas*, as liberal arts, to make the commons, make the public, make the nation of democratic citizenry? Is it not therefore important to protect this *Universitas*, whatever its impurities, from professionalization in the university? But we would ask what is already not possible in this talk in the hallways, among the buildings, in rooms of the university about possibility? How is the thought of the outside, as Gayatri Spivak means it, already not possible in this complaint?

The maroons know something about possibility. They are the condition of possibility of production of knowledge in the university—the singularities against the writers of singularity, the writers who write, publish, travel, and speak. It is not merely a matter of the secret labor upon which such space is lifted, though of course such space is lifted from collective labor and by it. It is rather that to be a critical academic in the university is to be against the university, and to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it, and to institute the negligence of that internal outside, that unassimilated underground, a negligence of it that is precisely, we must insist, the basis of the professions. And this act of against always already excludes the unrecognized modes of politics, the beyond of politics already in motion, the discredited criminal para-organization, what Robin Kelley might refer to as the infrapolitical field (and its music). It is not just the labor of the maroons but their prophetic organization that is negated by the idea of intellectual space in an organization called the university. This is why the negligence of the critical academic is always at the same time an assertion of bourgeois individualism.

Such negligence is the essence of professionalization where it turns out professionalization is not the opposite of negligence but its mode of politics in the United States. It takes the form of a choice that excludes the

prophetic organization of the Undercommons—to be against, to put into question the knowledge object, let us say in this case the university, not so much without touching its foundation, as without touching one’s own condition of possibility, without admitting the Undercommons and being admitted to it. From this, a general negligence of condition is the only coherent position. Not so much an antifoundationalism or foundationalism, as both are used against each other to avoid contact with the Undercommons. This always negligent act is what leads us to say there is no distinction between the university in the United States and professionalization. There is no point in trying to hold out the university against its professionalization. They are the same. Yet the maroons refuse to refuse professionalization, that is, to be against the university. The university will not recognize this indecision, and thus professionalization is shaped precisely by what it cannot acknowledge, its internal antagonism, its wayward labor, its surplus. Against this wayward labor it sends the critical, sends its claim that what is left beyond the critical is waste.

But in fact, critical education only attempts to perfect professional education. The professions constitute themselves in an opposition to the unregulated and the ignorant without acknowledging the unregulated, ignorant, unprofessional labor that goes on not opposite them but within them. But if professional education ever slips in its labor, ever reveals its condition of possibility to the professions it supports and reconstitutes, critical education is there to pick it up, and to tell it, never mind—it was just a bad dream, the ravings, the drawings of the mad. Because critical education is precisely there to tell professional education to rethink its relationship to its opposite—by which critical education means both itself and the unregulated, against which professional education is deployed. In other words, critical education arrives to support any faltering negligence, to be vigilant in its negligence, to be critically engaged in its negligence. It is more than an ally of professional education, it is its attempted completion.

A professional education has become a critical education. But one should not applaud this fact. It should be taken for what it is, not progress in the professional schools, not cohabitation with the *Universitas*, but counterinsurgency, the refounding terrorism of law, coming for the discredited, coming for those who refuse to write off or write up the Undercommons.

The *Universitas* is always a state/State strategy. Perhaps it’s surprising to say professionalization—that which reproduces the professions—is a state strategy. Certainly, critical academic professionals tend to be regarded today as harmless intellectuals, malleable, perhaps capable of some modest intervention in the so-called public sphere, like Bruce Robbins’s cowboy professionals in *Secular Vocations*. But to see how this underestimates

the presence of the state we can turn to a bad reading of Derrida's consideration of Hegel's 1822 report to the Prussian Minister of Education. Derrida notices the way that Hegel rivals the state in his ambition for education, wanting to put into place a progressive pedagogy of philosophy designed to support Hegel's worldview, to unfold as encyclopedic. This ambition both mirrors the state's ambition, because it, too, wants to control education and to impose a worldview, and threatens it, because Hegel's State exceeds and thus localizes the Prussian state, exposing its pretense to the encyclopedic. Derrida draws the following lesson from his reading: the *Universitas*, as he generalizes the university (but specifies it, too, as properly intellectual and not professional), always has the impulse of State, or enlightenment, and the impulse of state, or its specific conditions of production and reproduction. Both have the ambition to be, as Derrida says, onto- and auto-encyclopedic. It follows that to be either for the *Universitas* or against it presents problems. To be for the *Universitas* is to support this onto- and auto-encyclopedic project of the State as enlightenment, or enlightenment as totality, to use an old-fashioned word. To be too much against the *Universitas*, however, creates the danger of specific elements in the state taking steps to rid itself of the contradiction of the onto- and auto-encyclopedic project of the *Universitas* and replacing it with some other form of social reproduction, the anti-enlightenment—the position, for instance, of New Labour in Britain and of the states of New York and California with their “teaching institutions.” But a bad reading of Derrida will also yield our question again: what is lost in this undecidability? What is the price of refusing to be either for the *Universitas* or for professionalization, to be critical of both, and who pays that price? Who makes it possible to reach the aporia of this reading? Who works in the premature excess of totality, in the not ready of negligence?

The mode of professionalization that is the American university is precisely dedicated to promoting this consensual choice: an antifoundational critique of the University or a foundational critique of the university. Taken as choices, or hedged as bets, one tempered with the other, they are nonetheless always negligent. Professionalization is built on this choice. It rolls out into ethics and efficiency, responsibility and science, and numerous other choices, all built upon the theft, the conquest, the negligence of the outcast mass intellectuality of the Undercommons.

It is therefore unwise to think of professionalization as a narrowing and better to think of it as a circling, a circling of war wagons around the last camp of indigenous women and children. Think about the way the American doctor or lawyer regard themselves as educated, enclosed in the circle of the state's encyclopedia, though they may know nothing of philosophy or history. What would be outside this act of the conquest circle,

what kind of ghostly labored world escapes in the circling act, an act like a kind of broken phenomenology where the brackets never come back off and what is experienced as knowledge is the absolute horizon of knowledge whose name is banned by the banishment of the absolute. It is simply a horizon that does not bother to make itself possible. No wonder that whatever their origins or possibilities, it is theories of pragmatism in the United States and critical realism in Britain that command the loyalty of critical intellectuals. Never having to confront the foundation, never having to confront antifoundation out of faith in the unconfrontable foundation, critical intellectuals can float in the middle range. These loyalties banish dialectics with its inconvenient interest in pushing the material and abstract, the table and its brain, as far as it can, unprofessional behavior at its most obvious.

Professionalization Is the Privatization of the Social Individual through Negligence

Surely professionalization brings with it the benefits of competence. It may be the onto- and auto-encyclopedic circle of the university particular to the American state, but is it not possible to recuperate something from this knowledge for practical advances? Or, indeed, is it not possible to embark on critical projects within its terrain, projects that would turn its competencies to more radical ends? No, we would say, it is not. And saying so we prepare to part company with American critical academics, to become unreliable, to be disloyal to the public sphere, to be obstructive and shiftless, dumb with insolence in the face of the call to critical thinking.

Let us, as an example, act disloyally to the field of public administration and especially in masters of public administration programs, including related programs in public health, environmental management, non-profit and arts management, and the large menu of human services courses, certificates, diplomas, and degrees that underpin this disciplinary cluster. It is difficult not to sense that these programs exist against themselves, that they despise themselves. (Although later one can see that as with all professionalization, it is the underlying negligence that unsettles the surface of labor power.) The average lecture, in the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU for instance, may be more antistatist, more skeptical of government, more modest in its social policy goals than the average lecture in the avowedly neoclassical economics or new right political science departments at that same university. It would not be much different at Syracuse University, or a dozen other prominent public

administration schools. One might say that skepticism is an important part of higher education, but this particular skepticism is not founded on close study of the object in question. In fact, there is no state theory in public administration programs in the United States. Instead, the state is regarded as the proverbial devil we know. And whether it is understood in public administration as a necessary evil, or as a good that is nonetheless of limited usefulness and availability, it is always entirely knowable as an object. Therefore it is not so much that these programs are set against themselves. It is rather that they are set against some students, and particularly those who come to public administration with a sense of what Derrida has called a duty beyond duty, or a passion.

To be skeptical of what one already knows is of course an absurd position. If one is skeptical of an object then one is already in the position of not knowing that object, and if one claims to know the object, one cannot also claim to be skeptical of that object, which amounts to being skeptical of one's own claim. But this is the position of professionalization, and it is this position that confronts that student, however rare, who comes to public administration with a passion. Any attempt at passion, at stepping out of this skeptical of the known into an inadequate confrontation with what exceeds it and oneself, must be suppressed by this professionalization. This is not merely a matter of administering the world, but of administering away the world (and with it prophecy). Any other disposition is not only unprofessional but incompetent, unethical, and irresponsible, bordering on the criminal. Again the discipline of public administration is particularly, though not uniquely, instructive, both in its pedagogy and in its scholarship, and offers the chance to be disloyal, to smash and grab what it locks up.

Public administration holds to the idea both in the lecture hall and the professional journal that its categories are knowable. The state, the economy, and civil society may change size or shape, labor may enter or exit, and ethical consideration may vary, but these objects are both positivistic and normative, standing in discrete, spatial arrangement each to the other. Professionalization begins by accepting these categories precisely so competence can be invoked, a competence that at the same time guards its own foundation (like Michael Dukakis riding around in a tank phantasmatically patrolling his empty neighborhood). This responsibility for the preservation of objects becomes precisely that Weberian site-specific ethics that has the effect, as Theodor Adorno recognized, of naturalizing the production of capitalist sites. To question them thus becomes not only incompetent and unethical but the enactment of a security breach.

For instance, if one wanted to explore the possibility that public administration might best be defined as the labor of the relentless privati-

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zation of capitalist society, one could gain a number of unprofessional insights. It would help explain the inadequacy of the three major strains in public administration scholarship in the United States. The public ethos strain represented by projects like refounding public administration, and the journal *Administration and Society*; the public competence strain represented in the debate between public administration and the new public management, and the journal *Public Administration Review*; and the critical strain represented by PAT-Net, the Public Administration Theory Network, and its journal *Administrative Theory and Praxis*. If public administration is the competence to confront the socialization thrown up continuously by capitalism and to take as much of that socialization as possible and reduce it either to something called the public or something called the private, then immediately all three scholarly positions become invalid. It is not possible to speak of a labor that is dedicated to the reproduction of social dispossession as having an ethical dimension. It is not possible to decide the efficiency or scope of such labor after the fact of its expenditure in this operation by looking at it once it has reproduced something called the public or something called the private. And it is not possible to be critical and at the same time to accept uncritically the foundation of public administrationist thought in these spheres of the public and private, and to deny the labor that goes on behind the backs of these categories, in the Undercommons, of, for instance, the republic of women who run Brooklyn.

But this is an unprofessional example. It does preserve the rules and respect the terms of the debate, enter the speech community, by knowing and dwelling in its (unapproachable) foundational objects. It is also an incompetent example. It does not allow itself to be measured, applied, and improved, except to be found wanting. And it is an unethical example. Suggesting the utter dominance of one category over another—is this not fascism or communism? Finally, it is a passionate example full of prophecy not proof, a bad example of a weak argument making no attempt to defend itself, given over to some kind of sacrifice of the professional community emanating from the Undercommons. Such is the negligent opinion of professional public administration scholars.

What, further, is the connection then between this professionalization as the onto- and auto-encyclopedia of the American state and the spread of professionalization beyond the university or perhaps the spread of the university beyond the university, and with the colonies of the Undercommons? A certain riot into which professionalization stumbles—when the care of the social is confronted with its reaction, enforced negligence—a riot erupts and the professional looks absurd, like a recruiting booth at a carnival, professional services, personal professional services, turning pro

to pay for university. It is at this riotous moment that professionalization shows its desperate business, nothing less than to convert the social individual. Except perhaps, something more, the ultimate goal of counterinsurgency everywhere: to turn the insurgents into state agents.

Critical Academics Are the Professionals Par Excellence

The critical academic questions the university, questions the state, questions art, politics, culture. But in the Undercommons it is “no questions asked.” It is unconditional—the door swings open for refuge even though it may let in police agents and destruction. The questions are superfluous in the Undercommons. If you don’t know, why ask? The only question left on the surface is what can it mean to be critical when the professional defines himself or herself as one who is critical of negligence, while negligence defines professionalization? Would it not mean that to be critical of the university would make one the professional par excellence, more negligent than any other? To distance oneself professionally through critique, is this not the most active consent to privatize the social individual? The Undercommons might by contrast be understood as wary of critique, weary of it, and at the same time dedicated to the collectivity of its future, the collectivity that may come to be its future. The Undercommons in some ways tries to escape from critique and its degradation as university-consciousness and self-consciousness about university-consciousness, retreating, as Adrian Piper says, into the external world.

This maroon community, if it exists, therefore also seeks to escape the fiat of the ends of man. The sovereign’s army of academic antihumanism will pursue this negative community into the Undercommons, seeking to conscript it, needing to conscript it. But as seductive as this critique may be, as provoked as it may be, in the Undercommons they know it is not love. Between the fiat of the ends and the ethics of new beginnings, the Undercommons abides, and some find comfort in this. Comfort for the emigrants from conscription, not to be ready for humanity and who must endure the return of humanity nonetheless, as it may be endured by those who will or must endure it, as certainly those of the Undercommons endure it, always in the break, always the supplement of the General Intellect and its source. When the critical academic who lives by fiat (of others) gets no answer, no commitment, from the Undercommons, well then certainly the conclusion will come: they are not practical, not serious about change, not rigorous, not productive.

Meanwhile, that critical academic in the university, in the circle of the American state, questions the university. He claims to be critical of the

negligence of the university. But is he not the most accomplished professional in his studied negligence? If the labor upon labor, the labor among labor of the unprofessionals in the university sparks revolt, retreat, release, does the labor of the critical academic not involve a mockery of this first labor, a performance that is finally in its lack of concern for what it parodies, negligent? Does the questioning of the critical academic not become a pacification? Or, to put it plainly, does the critical academic not teach how to deny precisely what one produces with others, and is this not the lesson the professions return to the university to learn again and again? Is the critical academic then not dedicated to what Michael E. Brown phrased the impoverishment, the immiseration, of society's cooperative prospects? This is the professional course of action. This enlightenment-type charade is utterly negligent in its critique, a negligence that disavows the possibility of a thought of outside, a nonplace called the Undercommons—the nonplace that must be thought outside to be sensed inside, from whom the enlightenment-type charade has stolen everything for its game.

But if the critical academic is merely a professional, why spend so much time on him? Why not just steal his books one morning and give them to deregistered students in a closed-down and beery student bar, where the seminar on burrowing and borrowing takes place. Yet we must speak of these critical academics because negligence it turns out is a major crime of state.

Incarceration Is the Privatization of the Social Individual through War

If one were to insist the opposite of professionalization is that fugitive impulse to rely on the Undercommons for protection, to rely on the honor, and to insist on the honor of the fugitive community; if one were to insist the opposite of professionalization is that criminal impulse to steal from professions, from the university, with neither apologies nor malice, to steal the Enlightenment for others, to steal oneself with a certain blue music, a certain tragic optimism, to steal away with mass intellectuality; if one were to do this, would this not be to place criminality and negligence against each other? Would it not place professionalization, would it not place the university, against honor? And what then could be said for criminality?

Perhaps then it needs to be said that the crack dealer, terrorist, and political prisoner share a commitment to war, and society responds in kind with wars on crime, terror, drugs, communism. But “this war on the

commitment to war” crusades as a war against the asocial, that is, those who live “without a concern for sociality.” Yet it cannot be such a thing. After all, it is professionalization itself that is devoted to the asocial, the university itself that reproduces the knowledge of how to neglect sociality in its very concern for what it calls asociality. No, this war against the commitment to war responds to this commitment to war as the threat that it is—not mere negligence or careless destruction but a commitment against the idea of society itself, that is, against what Foucault called the Conquest, the unspoken war that founded, and with the force of law, refounds society. Not asocial but against social, this is the commitment to war, and this is what disturbs and at the same time forms the Undercommons against the university.

Is this not the way to understand incarceration in the United States today? And understanding it, can we not say that it is precisely the fear that the criminal will arise to challenge the negligent that leads to the need in the context of the American state and its particularly violent *Universitas* circle to concentrate always on Conquest denial?

The University Is the Site of the Social Reproduction of Conquest Denial

Here one comes face to face with the roots of professional and critical commitment to negligence, to the depths of the impulse to deny the thought of the internal outside among critical intellectuals, and the necessity for professionals to question without question. Whatever else they do, critical intellectuals who have found space in the university are always already performing the denial of the new society when they deny the Undercommons, when they find that space on the surface of the university, and when they join the Conquest denial by improving that space. Before they criticize the aesthetic and the Aesthetic, the state and the State, history and History, they have already practiced the operation of denying what makes these categories possible in the underlabor of their social being as critical academics.

The slogan on the Left, then, *universities, not jails*, marks a choice that may not be possible. In other words, perhaps more universities promote more jails. Perhaps it is necessary finally to see that the university contains incarceration as the product of its negligence. Perhaps there is another relation between the University and the Prison—beyond simple opposition or family resemblance—that the Undercommons reserves as the object and inhabitation of another abolitionism.

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What might appear as the professionalization of the American university, our starting point, now might better be understood as a certain intensification of method in the *Universitas*, a tightening of the circle. Professionalization cannot take over the American university—it is the critical approach of the university, its *Universitas*. And indeed, it appears now that this state with its peculiar violent hegemony must deny what Foucault called in his 1975–76 lectures the race war.

War on the commitment to war breaks open the memory of the Conquest. The new American studies should do this, too, if it is to be not just a people's history of the same country but movement against the possibility of a country, or any other; not just property justly distributed on the border but property unknown. And there are other spaces situated between the *Universitas* and the Undercommons, spaces that are characterized precisely by not having space. Thus the fire aimed at black studies by everyone from William Bennett to Henry Louis Gates Jr., and the proliferation of Centers without affiliation to the memory of the Conquest, to its living guardianship, to the protection of its honor, to the nights of labor, in the Undercommons.

The university, then, is not the opposite of the prison, since they are both involved in their way with the reduction and command of the social individual. And indeed, under the circumstances, more universities and fewer prisons would, it has to be concluded, mean the memory of the war was being further lost, and living unconquered, conquered labor abandoned to its lowdown fate. Instead, the Undercommons takes the prison as a secret about the Conquest, but a secret, as Sara Ahmed says, whose growing secrecy is its power, its ability to keep a distance between it and its revelation, a secret that calls into being the prophetic, a secret held in common, organized as secret, calling into being the prophetic organization.

The Undercommons of the University Is a Nonplace of Abolition

Ruth Wilson Gilmore: “Racism is the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group differentiated vulnerabilities to premature (social, civil and/or corporeal) death.”² What is the difference between this and slavery? What is, so to speak, the object of abolition?

Not so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons, that could have slavery, that could have the wage, and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society. The object of abolition then would have a resemblance to communism that would be, to return to Spivak, uncanny.

The uncanny that disturbs the critical going on above it, the professional going on without it, the uncanny that one can sense in prophecy, the strangely known moment, the gathering content, of a cadence, and the uncanny that one can sense in cooperation, the secret once called solidarity. The uncanny feeling we are left with is that something else is there in the Undercommons. It is the prophetic organization that works for the red and black abolition!

Notes

This article is dedicated to our mentor, Martin L. Kilson.

1. Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990), 43.

2. Ruth W. Gilmore, "Profiling Alienated Labor" (Paper presented at the Mellon-Sawyer Seminar on Redress in Social Thought, Law and Literature, University of California Humanities Research Institute, Irvine, California, 24 February 2003).