The Teaching Archive

A NEW HISTORY FOR LITERARY STUDY

Rachel Sagner Buurma
and Laura Heffernan

The University of Chicago Press CHICAGO AND LONDON

Introduction

A NEW SYLLABUS

In this book, you will see a series of major literary scholars in a place they are rarely remembered as inhabiting: the classroom. You will watch T. S. Eliot and his working-class students revise their tutorial syllabus in order to reimagine early modern drama as everyday literature written by working poets. You will follow Caroline Spurgeon, one of the first female professors in the UK, as she teaches her first-year women's college students to reconfigure the world of letters by compiling their own reading indexes. You will see I. A. Richards transform large lecture halls into experimental laboratories by enlisting his students as both test subjects and researchers in his poetry experiments. You will encounter Edith Rickert and her graduate students as they invent new methods of formal analysis for poetry and prose. You will watch J. Saunders Redding carefully compose his American literature syllabus so that the class would devote half of its time to Black writers. You will see Cleanth Brooks's students ask him questions about the historical contexts of the poems they read, while Edmund Wilson teaches James Joyce's newly available *Ulysses* alongside Shakespeare and Sterne to women undergraduates and local community members. You will follow poet Josephine Miles as she assigns freshman writing essays designed to get students to think about data rather than merely report it. And you will see how Simon J. Ortiz jettisons the traditional survey course in order to teach Native American literature to community college students.

Along with many others who populate this book, these figures measured out their professional lives by the academic year, the length of the term, and the lecture hour. Like countless other teachers and scholars, they worked—sometimes with students—in special collections archives, in computing laboratories, in private manuscript collections, in major research libraries, and at desks in studies or carrels. But mostly, they

worked in classrooms. They worked in classrooms at Bedford College for Women, Southall Grammar School as part of the University of London extension program, the University of Chicago, Elizabeth City Teachers College, Hampton Institute, Smith College, Louisiana State University, George Washington University, Lincoln University, the University of Chicago, Yale University, Harvard University, the University of California, Berkeley, the Institute for American Indian Arts, the College of Marin, and the University of New Mexico. They taught classes of all female undergraduates; they taught working-class adult students; they taught hybrid courses open to undergraduates and the general public; they taught classrooms of high school English teachers; they taught upper-level English majors; they taught dentistry students, freshman composition students, and graduate students. Their classrooms were various: wood-paneled seminar rooms close by dormitories, decaying former gymnasiums a train ride from students' homes, Quonset huts erected hastily during wartime, desk-lined rooms borrowed from elementary schools, communications studios, special collections large and small, and computing laboratories in friendly electrical engineering departments.

The true history of English literary study resides in classrooms like these; most of the study of literature that has happened in the university has happened in classrooms. Counted not just in hours and weeks, but in numbers of people, stacks of paper, and intensity of attention, the teaching of English literature has occupied a grand scale. More poems have been close-read in classrooms than in published articles, more literary texts have been cited on syllabuses than in scholarship, more scholarship has been read in preparation for teaching than in drafting monographs. Within institutions of secondary education large and small, numberless teachers and students have gathered to read both an astonishing number and an astonishing range of texts together. If it were possible to assemble the true, impossible teaching archive—all the syllabuses, handouts, reading lists, lecture notes, student papers, and exams ever made—it would constitute a much larger and more interesting record than the famous monographs and seminal articles that usually represent the history of literary study.

Despite this, the work of classrooms rarely appears in the stories that scholars tell about their past.[1] Histories of the discipline of English almost invariably take the scholarship of professors working at a handful of elite universities as evidence of the main line of the discipline's theories and practices.[2] To do this, they rely on a pervasive assumption: that literary study's core methods have been pioneered by scholars at elite universities, only later to "trickle down" to non-elite institutions, students, and teachers. In this kind of account, historicism comes to the American university via Johns Hopkins, as does structuralism. New Criticism, on the other hand, begins at Yale, and deconstruction makes landfall there. Scholars at major universities innovate; their ideas are disseminated "outward" to less elite universities and "downward"—often, it is imagined, in simplified or distorted form—to the classroom.[3]

Here we will make the case that the opposite is true. As we will show, English classrooms at both elite and non-elite institutions have made major works of scholarship and criticism. T. S. Eliot's important essay collection, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), grew directly out of his three-year course Modern English Literature; the volume centers on works that Eliot read with his students and, more importantly, reflects what he learned from teaching in the format of the Workers' Educational Association tutorial. Edmund Wilson's "The Historical Interpretation of Literature" grew out of the Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Criticism course that he taught at the University of Chicago in 1939. The indexing methods that Caroline Spurgeon practiced with her Art of Reading students at Bedford College for Women inspired her to create the data set of all of the metaphoric vehicles in Shakespeare's plays that she drew on to write her well-known last work, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935). We can sometimes see these traces of teaching in the many works of scholarship dedicated to classes or students: Wilson's dedication of "Dickens: The Two Scrooges" to English 354, Summer 1939, at the University of Chicago; Cleanth Brooks's dedication of *The Well Wrought Urn* to the students of his English 300-K class from the summer session of 1942, at the University of Michigan, "who discussed the problems with me and helped me work out some of the analyses"; I. A. Richards's dedication to *Practical Criticism* "to my collaborators, whether their work appears in these pages or not"; Edith Rickert's dedication of *New Methods for the Study of Literature* "to all students in English 143, 276, and 376, who by their hard work, lively interest in the subject, and active co-operation in the working out of new methods have made the book possible."[4] *The Teaching Archive* aims not just to show how classrooms have helped create particular books, but to offer readers a new way of seeing the outcomes of teaching, one that will recognize the presence of classrooms within all kinds of published scholarship.

In classrooms, teachers and students have invented and perfected the core methods and modes of literary study.[5] In classrooms, method grows, twining itself around particular texts and particular people. These methods are more various and more mixed than our current accounts allow. In a single semester—or even a single hour—a class might search out the layered registers in which a Keats poem meditates on its own status as

literature, admire a particular inflection of the sonnet form, or attempt to synthesize the spirit of an age from a few weeks of readings. They might also conjure the referential significance of details and historical allusions, index a dozen mentions of a literary reference, make fun of a scholarly edition's biased footnote, compare three versions of a novel's first paragraph, and learn to find a failed poem interesting. The downtimes of the class hour also cradle new ways of knowing literature; classes may draw implicit connections to tangentially related current events, dramatize differences between the room's first impressionistic response to the day's chosen poem, refer back to an absent student's claim from last week, offer some chatty preliminary background material, brainstorm deliberately wrong readings of a novel's first sentence, or playfully apply a strong literary theory to a viral meme. When teachers and students turn their collective attention to texts in classrooms, they decide together upon the interest that texts hold; they experiment with creating and conveying value. Perhaps singularly among the disciplines, literary study is enacted rather than rehearsed in classrooms; the answer to the question "Did I miss anything last week?" is truly "Yes—and you missed it forever."

Centering the history of critical method on classrooms also transforms our understanding of the literary canon. Classrooms throughout the twentieth century have sometimes housed the canon that we expect to find—the core works in each period of literary history, the New Critical canon of metaphysical poetry (Donne, Marvell) and modernist experimentation (Joyce, Woolf), the novelistic canon of the Great Tradition (Austen, Eliot, James). But more often, classrooms have been home to a much wider array of texts—texts that teachers and students encounter as both literary and unliterary, or in transition between one and the other. Papal indulgences, paper trails leading to unfinished novels, occasional essays by famous playwrights, poets' notebooks, public frescoes, lives and letters and personal histories, paratextual indexes, and forgotten pornography have all appeared on syllabuses alongside or instead of luminous poems and structurally perfect short stories.

So although we have long seen the classroom as the canon's fortress and main site of reproduction, the archive reveals that this canon has been at best a very incomplete story, and at worst a figment of our imaginations. This is most visible when we turn away from elite research universities and look into the classrooms of a broader array of secondary educational institutions, for several reasons. First, some of these institutions take different approaches to curriculum. In many extension schools, for instance, there was no set hierarchical curriculum for literary study; reading lists were developed contingently in relation to local histories, recent books of

interest, and students' demands or experiences. Second, universities often shape curricula around the identities of their student populations; at historically Black Hampton, for example, the English Department described their core American Literature course as "a survey of American prose and poetry beginning with the most important present day Negro writers and going back [to] the most effective writers of the Colonial period."[6] At Hampton, the canon represented the work of Black and white writers in equal measure to accurately reflect their importance to American culture. The class's presentation of great works also demanded attention to the materiality of canon formation and the politics of literacy itself.

This contingent and historicized canon has, we claim, in fact been the dominant model in literary study, though we only see this clearly when we place teaching at the center of literary history. Far from only presenting contextless, aesthetically valuable texts whose selection has come down from on high, most twentieth-century English literature classrooms have in some way discussed the making of literature itself—from how and what famous writers read in childhood to their first failed attempts at literature to their multiple drafts and revisions to their reception by everyday readers and critics and students. Teachers and students often recover the particular political or social circumstances that writers both responded to and shaped. They recover lost connotations within a familiar word's meaning; they draw pictures of old newspapers on the chalkboard; they read the legal decisions that controlled access to controversial texts; they track the publishing networks that determined into what hands certain genres came. This all may sound like fodder for an upper-level or graduate seminar, but our research suggests that students at all levels—perhaps particularly beginning students—have worked to understand the meaning of what is before them through an account of how it was made, and by whom, and under what shaping, but not determinative, conditions.

This new model of the canon is the most surprising discovery of our turn to the teaching archive.[7] And this realization opens up a further insight. Once we see that teachers and students in these classrooms regularly gather around texts that are not traditionally canonical, we can see that literature classrooms are in the business of creating literary value, not merely receiving or reproducing it. Studying the historical or material or biographical life of a literary work isn't ancillary to some more central formal attention to the aesthetic features of a poem or novel, but a core means by which groups of readers have come to take interest in and attach value to texts—to make them, in a sense, literary.[8] And, in fact, the classroom's close attention to the formal features of that poem or novel—the history of classroom-based close reading—turns out to be, from this per-

spective, yet another way that literary value is made or conveyed. This is to say that literary value *seems* to emanate from texts, but is actually made by people. And classrooms are the core site where this collective making can be practiced and witnessed.

Classrooms offer us both a truer and a more usable account of what literary study is and does, and of what its value is today. This book argues that the value of literary study inheres in the long history of teaching as it was lived and experienced: in constant conversation with research, partly determined by local institutional histories, unevenly connected with students' lives, and as part of a longer and wider story that has never been written down. University teaching can often feel isolated; lacking an account of shared practices, it can seem marooned from the research interests that constitute our main historical narratives and standards of professional value.[9] This long-standing sense of disconnection has grown as institutions prize teaching away from research in tenure files, hiring, and budgetary structures. Restoring a full material history to the ephemeral hours we spend in the classroom will not in itself change institutional structures or revolutionize labor practices. But it will bring a usable history back into view, one that better represents the complex, dynamic work our profession has undertaken in the past, is continuing to perform in the present, and must offer in the future.

Disciplinary History Against the Divide

What we find in the teaching archive overturns nearly every major account of what the history of literary studies has been. Looking at classroom practice—and particularly looking at classroom practice at a wider range of institutions than those usually considered—demolishes the received idea that literature professors once taught a narrow canon that "opened" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Evidence from the teaching archive also scrambles existing genealogies for twentieth-century methodological change; the teaching archive dispels our long-cherished accounts of the interminable tennis match between eras in which we championed literature for its aesthetic value and eras in which we modeled ourselves after the sciences by producing knowledge about the world in which texts were written. In addition to dissolving the scholars vs. critics divide, the teaching archive likewise dismisses the idea that formalist critics have been the prime architects and champions of undergraduate pedagogy in English. By extension, looking at actual classroom practice suggests that widespread announcements of a contemporary return to the aesthetic are perhaps only the latest return of our perennial method manifestos, recasting the usual figures of method war.

Disciplinary historians of English have, by and large, declined to research in their field. In lieu of creating new knowledge about the history of literary study, chroniclers of English instead recycle and reinterpret a handful of tropes. Figures of opposition and impasse—the bloodless battle, the unbridgeable divide, the mutual exclusion, the cavernous fault line, the central split, the twin poles, the disciplinary pendulum, with its reliably contrapuntal swing—provide the morphology of our tales of literary studies. Marvelously flexible, these tropes determine the plot in which scholars and critics have traded periods of supremacy; these tropes also write the script for contemporary debates. Over time, they have formed a canopy that blocks the sunshine from ever reaching the seedlings of practitioners' own experiences of their teaching and research.

The divide that dogs English studies is imagined by disciplinary historians as a formative one—a late nineteenth-century struggle over whether English professors should evaluate literature or produce knowledge about it.[10] In the nineteenth century, writes Michael Warner in one such account, "a conflict arose between philological scholarship and the literary culture over the study of literature"—at war, we find "genteel urban critics" facing "professional philologists" with "little or no interest in teaching literature." Others include an only slightly different cast of characters: for Wallace Douglas, "college professors of rhetoric" and doctors of divinity, who taught English as the "poor man's classics" to an upwardly mobile middle class, fought against "heady notions about scholarship that were coming out of Hopkins." William Riley Parker sees a battle between "orators" and "philologists"; Franklin E. Court discusses competition between early professors working in a Scottish tradition of oratory and moral philosophy and the late nineteenth century arrival of philologists. Gerald Graff describes a "fundamental disagreement" between "Arnoldian humanism and scientific research."[11] Even those who, like Guillory, admit English's more multifarious nineteenth-century roots in "philology, literary history, belles lettres, [and] composition," still see the late nineteenth century as a moment of conflict, "constitutive of the discipline itself," between literary historians and philologists who treated judgments about literature as matters of fact, and belletristic lecturers who modeled the making of literary judgments.[12] These accounts of conflicted origins cite a handful of late nineteenth-century polemics,[13] usually written by critics, as evidence of an entire period's practices. This handful of essays constitutes what Carol Atherton refers to as the "metadiscourses" of English.[14]

These origin stories about a foundational struggle between philologists (sometimes joined by antiquarians or literary historians) and someone else (oratory professors, humanists, literary men, extension lecturers, doctors of divinity) are staged as a confrontation between scholarly research and undergraduate pedagogy. As Wallace Martin argues, "Pedagogy and criticism stood opposed to scholarship as the basis of a professional formation."[15] Philologists and antiquarian scholars, in this account, have no compelling model of undergraduate teaching. Meanwhile, critic-lecturers are seen as charismatic but amateurish; they are dilletantes or generalists with no compelling model of literary research or scholarship.[16] For Guillory, philologists found it "difficult to devise an engaging undergraduate pedagogy" because they "stopped short of fully interpretive hypotheses, and [their] judgments of quality were usually merely assumed." Meanwhile, "critics presided over interpretations and values, which supposedly had no objective basis and therefore did not qualify for serious academic study," as Graff argues.[17] In other words, philologists or literary historians can't teach, while belletrists can't research. Or sometimes, in a slight twist, critics can teach "the great mass of undergraduates," while scholars thrive in the seminar comprised of a "minority of scholarly or advanced students."[18]

For disciplinary historians, this foundational divide between teacher-critics and scholar-researchers reverberates through the twentieth century. In this account, the twentieth-century history of English literature consists of a contrapuntal movement between historicist scholarship and formalist criticism. Graff's *Professing Literature* is probably the most well-known history that takes the "conflict . . . which has pitted scholars against critics" as a lens through which to understand a century of disciplinary history: "one of the recurrent motifs in the present history," Graff writes, "is the appeal to 'literature itself' against various forms of commentary *about* literature as a cure for institutional dilemmas."[19] Graff is far from alone in seeing twentieth-century literary study as a series of generational-methodological shifts whereby early twentieth-century scholars of philology and literary history are gradually replaced by the New Critics, who emphasize close-reading pedagogy, and who are, in turn, replaced by feminist scholars and Black studies scholars and Marxist historians and cultural studies scholars and new historicists, all of whom restore to view the historical contexts in which poems and canons are made.

This scholars vs. critics or historicists vs. formalists history of literary study has only become more prominent in recent years, which have seen the rise of "new formalism," of "strategic formalism," of "post-critical reading," of "surface reading," and of new defenses of aesthetic experience.[20] These methodological manifestos nearly all begin by recounting our discipline's history as one of contrapuntal method war; they nearly all depict formalist and historicist methods as dramatically opposed.[21] They suggest that a generation of historical or "critical" or "contextualist" scholarship is or should be coming to an end; they suggest that a turn from contexts to texts—to the experience of reading them, to the judgment of their merits, to the apprehension of their forms inside and out in the world—would also constitute a return to what has always been at the core of our profession.[22] This promise of returning to supposedly foundational practices takes on renewed urgency in an era of engineered enrollment decline and other forms of devaluation and defunding, as we discuss in our conclusion. This book declines to take up arms in the method wars. But it does suggest that manifestos like these tend—today and throughout the profession's history—to dominate our metadiscourse while misrepresenting our practice. Even further, the authority of such accounts seems to derive from the glibness with which they characterize the history of practice as starkly divided.

This book rejects the idea that our discipline has been pulled in two directions, that its core has been formed by controversy over method or that its goals of producing knowledge about literature and appreciating literature have been mutually exclusive. Formalism and historicism, we argue, are convenient abstractions from a world of practice in which those methods rarely oppose one another. These abstractions do not describe or refer to actually existing groups of scholars, nor would most practitioners recognize themselves as belonging to such groups. When we look to classroom practices rather than methodological manifestos or critics' high-profile complaints about the professionalization of literary study, we find alternative genealogies for literary study's most familiar practices and longer, continuous histories for literary study's seemingly recent methods. We show, in short, everything you can't see if you believe—following the most-cited documents in disciplinary history—that critics have exercised a monopoly on the governance of literary value and the practice of undergraduate teaching.

Our opening chapters overturn existing accounts of the discipline's origins in a late nineteenth-century battle between teacher-critics and scholar-philologists.[23] We show instead the lost history of research-based undergraduate and extension school teaching. Methods of manuscript research, source studies, and histories of literary periods and figures were often taught in undergraduate classrooms. And not as professional training: these classrooms full of women and working-class adults were not in the business of accrediting students as professional literary scholars.

These students would return to the shop counter or the mine shaft; they would graduate to become stenographers or laboratory assistants. The scholar-teachers who taught them had fully-fledged accounts of the place of literary research in liberal arts and extension education. For these lecturers and tutors—many of whom were themselves unaccredited or playing catch-up in these decades of professionalization—teaching research methods and literary histories to nontraditional students and female undergraduates was a critical practice. Far from the received disciplinary historical scene in which rapt (or bored) students listened to charismatic lectures about great authors, these tutors and students studied how writers worked, how they were paid, and how critics built their reputations. This collective work demystified the ideal of the genius author, allowing students to imagine that they, too, could become writers or critics. Giving students a role in the writing of literature and the production of knowledge was one way the university participated in the nineteenth century's "long revolution," adapting to changes in the idea of what culture was.[24]

The flourishing of literary history and bibliographic research in the undergraduate classroom opened the way to early twentieth-century literary formalisms. Teachers in the 1920s and '30s conducted classroom-based experiments in isolating and enumerating aspects of literary form such as imagery, syntax, sentence length, word count, or rhythm; in doing so, they drew upon their own training in the making of scholarly tools like the concordance and the index. These teachers prompted their students to define and identify and count the elements of literary style by consensus; they believed that this almost mechanical work would serve to cultivate literary sensibilities and tastes. Later, the New Critics would claim to democratize aesthetic sensibility by teaching the poem on the page, but this earlier incarnation of pedagogical formalism differs from New Critical close reading in its transformation of the classroom into a "laboratory" and students into teams of reader-experimenters. Their iterative granular tabulation and interpretation of literature's formal features aimed to reanimate and reveal the poet's own compositional work.[25]

This book also shows the persistence of historical and materialist approaches to literary study through a midcentury long imagined as uniformly New Critical in orientation. In these decades, public-facing literary critics both published in scholarly journals and regularly reviewed books for newspapers and magazines, lectured to general audiences, and served as cultural attachés to the federal government. The classroom practices of these midcentury figures show them turning back to the literary history of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries in order to revalue authors and texts long regarded as not quite literary. In courses on Civil War–era

journalism or nineteenth-century memoirs and letters written by both free and enslaved African Americans, these teachers newly valued as literature documents that had seemed of merely historical interest. Like many of our earlier bibliographers and philologists, these teachers considered the process through which literary reputations and ideas about aesthetic value had been made and unmade.

Our book finds several poet-critics at work through midcentury and the decades after. Yet while this familiar figure has long been associated with the charismatic close reading of the poem on the page, we find them in their classrooms studying poetry rather than poems. These figures—working poets who also taught—practiced a formalism that was tied not to the literary object or the "text" itself but to smaller, more extensive units of poetic production. They tended to focus on continuity rather than rupture, traditions rather than innovations, minor poets rather than major. So, too, were they interested in the relationship between the writing of poetry and the criticism of poetry in the past as well as the present. Their syllabuses' writerly orientation toward literary technique and its literary history constitutes, we find, a robust tradition in its own right but one not currently represented by disciplinary history.

These are some of the ways that a disciplinary historical focus on practice rather than theory reveals interconnections rather than oppositions and continuities rather than ruptures. Together, all of our chapters find longer histories for reading methods that our discipline tends to see as recent developments. The widespread sense that quantitative methods of "distant reading" have been pioneered by male scholars at research universities (with the resources afforded by Silicon Valley and major grant funding) melts away when we look at the earlier twentieth-century women professors, both on and off the tenure track, who used classrooms as the original supercomputers. We show how word counts and tabulations were the basis of collaborative projects undertaken by entire classrooms of students during the first half of the twentieth century. Some of these women also pioneered computational method.[26] Our research reveals, for example, how Josephine Miles led a team to create the first computational literary concordance. Just as quantitative and computational literary method has a long classroom history, so also do identity-based criticism and ideology critique. In every decade of the twentieth century, we find teachers and students choosing to read texts and authors whose interests they shared. Female professors have taught women writers—even women writers contemporary to them—throughout the decades we consider. Ideology critique—imagined, in recent years, as beginning with Fredric Jameson—informs the work of multiple classrooms we study.

The project of counting stock references in literary texts originated with English professors in the 1920s and '30s who did anti-racist work analyzing the circulation of stereotypes.

This classroom-based history of reading methods challenges disciplinary histories that see methods as chess moves in a game of institutional prestige. The most compelling and well-known version of such critical disciplinary history is John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation. Cultural Capital* appeared in the midst of the culture wars; it offered not a complete history of the discipline but a critical genealogy for its moment. In it, Guillory cautions literature professors against confusing literary representation with political representation. Making the canon more "representative" of minority writers, Guillory argues, was not equivalent to changing political representation; to believe otherwise was to ignore the school itself as a site where social hierarchies are reproduced rather than changed. In Guillory's account, discourses of literary value work above all to secure the high status of literary culture. His history of the core methods of English explains how theorists have worked, over time, to sequester the realm of the "literary" apart from politics and to distinguish literary language from referential speech.[27] Yet for all the power this view assigns to the institution of the school, any sense of its actual existence and workings are curiously absent. Like *Cultural Capital*, many disciplinary histories of the 1980s and '90s considered literature and criticism as institutions. To do so, they relied on a relatively abstract model of the institution—though through its shadowy outlines one could glimpse the solid infrastructure of Yale and Harvard and Oxford.

Our book contributes to the history of the actual institutions that have made the study of English literature. To do so, we draw on the work of scholars such as Gauri Viswanathan, Robert Crawford, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Jonathan Rose, who first included a broader range of schools into "rise of English" accounts.[28] More recently, a great many scholars have expanded the kinds of institutions we typically include in disciplinary histories of English or histories of criticism. Carol Atherton has looked to late nineteenth-century British regional universities; Alexandra Lawrie to 1890s London extension schools; Jennifer McDonell and Leigh Dale to Australian universities; Elizabeth Renker to American land-grant universities and historically Black colleges; Catherine Robson to the American elementary school; Laura R. Fisher to progressive reform institutions like the settlement house, the working girls' club, and the African American college; and Ben Conisbee Baer to public education programs in the 1920s–1940s colonial world; Danica Savonick to CUNY during the era of open admissions. Nancy Glazener and Deidre Lynch have excavated

the earlier public (Glazener) and private (Lynch) literary cultures that prepared the professionalization of literary study in the late nineteenth century. And Merve Emre has incorporated mid-twentieth-century institutions of international relations and communications.[29]

Looking at a wider range of institutions restores to view the long history of classroom critique that the last wave of critical disciplinary history obscured. For example, Guillory's claim that a toothless liberal pluralism guided the integration and expansion of syllabuses after the 1970s does not hold weight when we consider the much longer history of fully integrated courses on American literature long taught at historically Black colleges and eventually imported to northern, elite, and predominantly white schools in the United States. Those courses continue to be taught at historically Black colleges and universities today.[30] It is ironic that the wave of critical disciplinary histories—by criticizing and historicizing the institutionalization of aesthetic ideals, canons, and close reading—buried from view the long traditions of classroom-based critique in English. We seek to restore these traditions to view.

Looking at classrooms from a broad range of institutions is crucial in our present moment, when the loss of our sense of higher education as a public good (and accompanying state defunding, private fundraising, and student debt profiteering) has rapidly increased the stratification of higher education. Decades after Graff's *Professing Literature* grappled with the theory wars of the 1980s and Guillory's *Cultural Capital* responded to the culture wars of the 1990s, we find ourselves facing an institutional landscape that the last generation's major disciplinary historians of English hardly anticipated in their most pessimistic passages. In the new millennium, the very value of humanistic knowledge production itself—the unquestioned ground beneath the feet of all participants in the culture and theory wars—seems to be up for debate as economic value replaces all other forms of value in discussions of higher education. The prescient endings of both Graff's and Guillory's books call for us to re-enliven literary study by remaking classrooms. *Professing Literature*'s closing pages recommend that English classrooms become "explicitly historicized" so they may transform the "frozen bod[ies] of knowledge" that students simply receive into "social products with a history that they might have a personal and critical stake in," a change that would counter what Graff sees as the English department's habit of absorbing methodological conflict into institutional structure while systematically excluding conflicts from the classroom.[31] And Guillory's *Cultural Capital* offers a final, counterfactual "thought experiment" in which aesthetic valuation would be untethered from the school and "what we call canon formation would . . . become a

much larger part of social life."[32] *The Teaching Archive* begins where *Professing Literature* and *Cultural Capital* end, replacing their wished-for, utopian future classrooms with the many real yet under-studied, under-archived, and undervalued classrooms in which our discipline's history has really been made.

Sources and Methods

Given the long history and vast scope of the teaching of English literature, it is difficult to understand how it has been relegated to footnote status in histories of literary study. Part of the reason is that the history of university teaching is difficult to trace. Teaching's past has escaped from notice because its record is one of ephemeral acts and documents. Text selection, the leading of discussion, the writing and circulation of a seminar paper, reading aloud from a mimeographed sheet of quotations—all these practices, whether rehearsed or improvised, remain largely unrecorded except in occasional retrospective accounts by teachers or (less often) students.[33] We can imaginatively summon the rich ecosystem of manuscript circulation that must have existed in some form around any given classroom from the fifteenth through the twenty-first century: pages of student notes and doodles made during lectures; graded quizzes with scribbled comments, and handouts (some of them with three-hole punches made by more organized students during the era of the three-ringed binder). And most of all, notes: professors detailing—in copious or skeletal fashion, organized by day or by week—the order of the class, the questions to ask, the familiar mundane reminders of due dates and formatting and extra lectures to attend; students' mingled descriptions, interpretations, and dissents from the lecture or conversation around them. If such traces had been preserved, we could imagine a problem of classroom information overload: To which classrooms should we pay most attention? Whose perspective—student, teacher—counts more? How to take genre and convention into account? What of that which we see is disciplinarily significant? What is specific to institution, and what to individual?

But so far, we face the opposite problem. Not having seen teaching as an activity that has a history, we have rarely preserved its traces; scholars often preserve their teaching materials within their lifetimes for reuse, but rarely have they seen them as of interest to other teachers or to future scholars. It should not therefore surprise us that the material traces of teaching have rarely found their way into well-cataloged university archives. The relative infrequency with which teaching papers have been

preserved attests to the fact that at every step of their potential preservation, they have tended to be devalued—by teachers who don't think of them as worth preserving, by booksellers and libraries who purge them when a scholar's papers are bought or accessioned (over and over—"they threw the teaching papers away"; "she threw the teaching papers away before she gave us her files"), and by catalogers who are given limited time and resources for cataloging them or describing them in finding aids. Unlike drafts of published papers, which have the alibi of existing as evidence of an ultimately peer-reviewed, polished, published scholarly artifact, teaching papers are the often-embarrassing remnants of a process undertaken almost always under less-than-ideal conditions. (Upon learning about our project, many scholars we know have threatened to go straight home and bury the evidence accumulated in their old hard drives and paper files in order to keep them from someday falling into the hands of people like us. Few, it seems, would want their teaching papers to be taken—or mistaken—as examples of anything.)

Striking exceptions to this rule exist. Occasionally a beautifully preserved teaching archive surfaces: Caroline Spurgeon's papers include both her own student notes and her teaching notes, apparently nearly complete. Beautifully bound in red and black leather with embossed gold titles and neatly indexed, they are interleaved with materials like the letterpress-printed examples of her own research notes that she handed out as guides in her Art of Reading class for first-year students of English. Archivists at Royal Holloway, University of London, have cataloged Spurgeon's archive in exquisite detail, their care for her notes matching or even exceeding her own. Spurgeon also preserved her research notes; the thousands of cards containing her quantitative research into the metaphors of Shakespeare and his contemporaries reside in the Folger Shakespeare Library. She intended that her heroic, informational scholarship would be open to the use of future scholars, not just the basis of her own publications.

Spurgeon's archive is one real example of a kind of fantasy: a single gemlike instance of what all scholars' archives might have looked like if individuals and institutions had valued teaching much more than we do. Her notebooks offer a view of what teaching materials could look like if we imagined them being reused by others in new classrooms and preserved as a record of an important activity with traceable as well as trackless results. But the teaching materials left behind by most scholars of literature look nothing like this. When they are preserved at all, syllabuses, lecture notes, and handouts tend to be accidentally archived along with more valued materials—drafts of scholarly essays, review clippings,

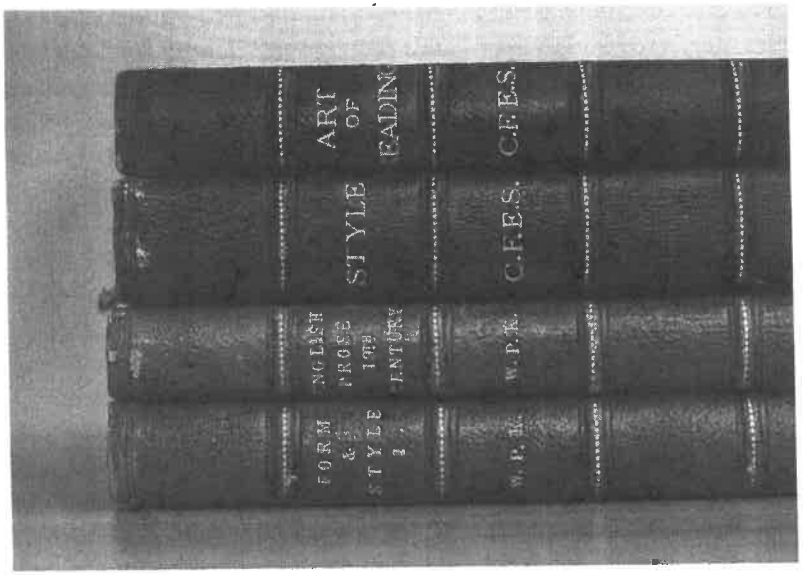


FIGURE 0.1. Caroline Spurgeon kept her student notes and her teaching notes in leather-bound volumes (1880s–1910s) with the names of the courses embossed in gilt on the spines. Here we see the notes she took in W. P. Ker's Form and Style course and his English Prose of the 19th Century at the University of London, as well as notes for her courses the Art of Reading and Style, which she taught at Bedford College for Women. RHC PP 7 Archives, Royal Holloway, University of London.

or correspondence. While piecing together the teaching materials of midcentury man of letters Edmund Wilson, we discovered a page from a typescript draft of his article "The Historical Interpretation of Literature" on the verso of Wilson's draft syllabus and first-day lecture for his Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Criticism class.[34] Other teaching materials survive because they are intended for publication. For example, famous New Critic Cleanth Brooks's lectures for English 71 appear in his archive in Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in multiple neatly organized typescript drafts, audio-recorded and then transcribed by a typist at Bantam Books in anticipation of their (never-realized) publication as a book. T. S. Eliot's class notes have not survived, nor have his students' papers, but his letters, the official lecturers' reports he filed each year, and most of all the published syllabuses for his three-year Modern English Literature tutorial class help us understand how his teaching changed over time in response to his developing sense of who his students were and how they learned. Other figures' archives yield thousands of pages of class

notes filed by text (in the case of Josephine Miles) or class (in the case of J. Saunders Redding); for some professors, the only extant traces of their teaching are in their publications.

These material-textual traces of teaching help us rediscover some of the rhythms of the lecture hour, the temporality of the course's week, and the semester-long social life of the class. To move from material texts to reading practices, we draw on the methods of book history and cultural sociology. These methods help us avoid the common temptation of mistaking a book's contents for its use—of interpreting, for example, the pedagogical framing in popular classroom anthologies as evidence of actual classroom practice. We have also benefited from the subset of material text scholarship concerning the history of scholarly practices by Ann Blair and William Clark. As Clark notes, "One can learn much from the material practices of academics—about the nature of academic work from the transformation of the lecture catalogue, about the constitution of the research library from the battle over its catalogues, about the commodification of academics from tables evaluating them."[35] Likewise, we have benefited from those critics who have looked beyond the metadiscourses of English to generate accounts of critical and reading practices that constitute what Stefan Collini, playing on "normal science," calls our discipline's "normal criticism."[36]

Are the figures and institutions in this book representative? Yes and no. The relative difficulty of tracking down teaching papers means that chance and serendipity as well as informed selection guided our choice of figures and institutions. However, though the book looks in detail at only a handful of figures and classrooms, wherever possible we include contextualizing detail about contiguous teachers and similar institutions by including the papers of colleagues who taught down the hall, across the street, or across the country. In this book, T. S. Eliot's syllabuses sit alongside the hundreds of other University of London extension syllabuses and lecturers' reports we studied. Josephine Miles's exams and class notes and noun counts take context from Berkeley's course catalogs as well as from her colleagues' and successors' teaching in the Berkeley English Department. Simon J. Ortiz's syllabuses come into focus in relation to other courses taught in the College of Marin's Ethnic Studies Department as well as Native American studies courses at San Diego State University and the University of New Mexico. Regardless of whether these figures are representative or unusual, they are clearly not exemplary in the sense of being models we hold up for possible emulation, though some of the past teaching we describe seems new and exciting now.

Ten Courses in Seven Chapters

The Teaching Archive's seven chapters retrace the steps of traditional histories of literary study while considering a greater range of institutions than such histories typically examine. Geographically, the book begins in the UK in the 1910s and '20s and then shifts, as disciplinary histories often do, to the United States for the decades from midcentury through the 1970s. Along the way, we see how teaching materials radically transform our understanding of some of the key texts, figures, and moments that feature centrally in existing histories. At the same time, we also profile a series of figures who are well-known in their subfields but rarely incorporated into broader histories of the discipline.

Chapters 1 and 2 take up the interconnected worlds of women's colleges and extension schools to reveal the deeply collaborative and research-based nature of these classes held for women and working-class students around the time of World War I. Chapter 1 considers the Art of Reading, taught at Bedford College for Women in 1913 by eminent early modernist Caroline Spurgeon. Spurgeon's Art of Reading course was devised to guide beginning students through the process of academic research. She started by teaching them how to pull a volume off a library shelf and quickly skim its pages, and ended by modeling the creation of polished personal indexes with her own letterpress-printed notes on John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. For Spurgeon, this seemingly informational work of indexing actually enacted John Henry Newman's ideal of liberal education as the "extension" of knowledge. Indexes demystified literature, showing students not only how a work was made, but also suggesting how they might make it differently. Spurgeon and her research team spent most of the 1920s and early 1930s doing this same kind of indexing work with Shakespeare's corpus in preparation for what became her magisterial work of distant reading, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935). Her extensive indexing of the vehicles of the plays' metaphors—the stars, jewels, and seas that seem to exist only to lend their properties to lovers' eyes or enemies' ambitions—finds the plays' most literary parts in the material existence of Shakespeare's everyday life. Some literary critics disparaged Spurgeon's masterwork as merely informational, but when we restore the context of her teaching, the critical force and conceptual claims behind her work's referentiality snap into focus.

Chapter 2 takes up the three-year Modern English Literature tutorial that T. S. Eliot taught between 1916 and 1919 under the auspices of the University of London Joint Committee for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Working People. Like Spurgeon, Eliot taught several extension courses for working adults during the war years. Drawing on a wide array of extension syllabuses and lecturer's reports from this decade, we describe how early twentieth-century tutorials like Eliot's were quite radical in design: students and tutors wrote their syllabuses together, and tutors encouraged their students to perform original research and to draw on the unrecorded histories of their work and their families to revise existing disciplinary knowledge. Eliot's course gradually adopted the ethos of this institution. His Modern English Literature syllabuses and lecturer's reports show that as the three-year class proceeded, Eliot acceded to his students' interests and requests, rewrote essay prompts to accommodate their work schedules, and reorganized his syllabus away from individual authors and toward more interconnected themes and questions. In their third year together, Eliot refused to teach the contemporary literature syllabus his students desired because he did not "favor the study of living authors."[37] But he accepted their second choice of early modern literature and composed a syllabus for his working-class students that presented Elizabethan poets and playwrights as working writers. When the tutorial ended in 1919, Eliot transformed the syllabus into the essays of *The Sacred Wood* (1920). Identifying that work's origins in Eliot's classroom allows us to reinterpret it entirely, understanding Eliot's famous canon reformation not as an astringent and elite valuation of minor poets, but as a reading of literary history guided by the extension school's favoring of collective work over individual genius.

Whereas our first two chapters show teachers and students learning to value literature by researching it, chapter 3 turns to two figures—I. A. Richards and Edith Rickert—who used their classrooms to stage dramatic experiments in literary reading. We look at several iterations of the Practical Criticism course that I. A. Richards taught at Cambridge University before and after the publication of *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (1929). Scholars have long seen *Practical Criticism* as a dour text promising to import rigor and standards into undergraduate English studies. Yet whereas the book *Practical Criticism* exhaustively cataloged and corrected students' reading errors, in the Practical Criticism class, Richards addressed his students as fellow researchers rather than study subjects. Edith Rickert, another 1920s pedagogical experimenter, enlisted the students in her University of Chicago course Scientific Analysis of Style to help her invent the "new methods for the study of literature" that would appear in her 1927 book of that title. Both Rickert and Richards demanded from students not polished readings of literary works, but their cooperation in the process of gathering and organizing bits of data about the formal properties of texts and the interpretive decisions of readers. Like

other classroom experimenters and organizers of literary laboratories in the 1920s, Richards and Rickert believed that their new methods would elevate the discernment of individual students, but only in the context of what Richards called "co-operative inquiry."[38] They believed that collective literary study be considered as a valuable social activity both itself and as a tool for elevating individual judgment.

The next chapters of *The Teaching Archive* turn to the decades around midcentury to offer a new, more accurate story of one of the most familiar and important stages of our discipline's development. Chapter 4, like chapters 1 and 2, offers a strong case for how teaching papers from institutions rarely centered by histories of literary study upend accepted disciplinary narratives. In it we turn to the racially integrated English literature courses taught by J. Saunders Redding from the 1930s through the 1970s. Redding is remembered today as one of the makers of the African American literary canon, his fifty-year career bookended by two major publications: *To Make a Poet Black* (1939) and the seminal anthology (with Arthur P. Davis) *Cavalcade: Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present* (1971). Publication of the latter coincided with Redding's appointment as the first African American professor of literary criticism in the Ivy League and cemented his reputation as the "dean of African-American studies" even as his own institutional vision for American literature's integration was eclipsed by the rise of Black studies programs.[39] In this chapter, we return to the materials that remain from Redding's years teaching in southern historically Black colleges in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, where he and others first developed survey courses that presented American literature as the collective history of white and Black authors writing with urgency and immediacy about their material and social circumstances. "Until relatively recent times, writing by both black and white Americans had little to do with aesthetics either as philosophy or in practice," read the opening premise of the Negro in American Literature syllabus that Redding taught regularly at the Hampton Institute and later carried to Cornell and other northern universities in the 1970s.[40] Redding's courses abandoned formally conscious texts in order to explore genres that documented the vast and strange collection of American lives ignored by official histories. Disciplinary histories, focused on elite, predominantly white universities, have seen curricular integration as a matter of adding Black writers to preexisting syllabuses or offering specialized classes in African American literature; we restore to view an earlier classroom-based model that offers us a new vision of the relation between critical race studies and the teaching of literature.

In chapter 5, we follow Redding's historicist critical values into the classrooms of Edmund Wilson and Cleanth Brooks. These two teachers at first seem quite opposed: Brooks, a formalist; Wilson, a historicist; Brooks, a critic with a close relationship to disciplinarity; Wilson, a critic with a close relationship to journalism and reviewing. We might imagine what we will find in Brooks's classroom, for even to mention the New Critical classroom evokes familiar images: rows of desks filled with GI Bill students, mimeographed poems on a single page, a charismatic, democratic teacher intent upon clearing away all of the "specialized rubbish . . . standing between the reader of a poem and the poem."[41] Above all, the New Critical classroom is remembered, with loathing or longing, as the place where close reading provided literary critics with a powerful account of both their specialization and their wider appeal. Yet in the actual classroom of Brooks's Contemporary Poetic Theory and Practice at Yale University in 1963, we find discussions of historical references, off-the-cuff paraphrasing, and the sketching of author biography as often as (and as preparation for) the masterful formalist reading familiar to us from books like *The Well Wrought Urn*.

In the second half of chapter 5, Edmund Wilson's teaching materials further challenge our received sense that a literature free from politics and history dominated midcentury classrooms. We follow Wilson's career as he travels through several universities from the 1930s through the 1960s. We begin with the Introduction to James Joyce course that Wilson offered for Smith College undergraduates and the general public in 1942. Wilson's account of how a text like Joyce's *Ulysses* changes through a reader's multiple returns helped him explain to the students and townspeople who attended his lectures how literary value changes over historical time. Wilson's critics complained that his historical relativism left him without a true account of literary value, his work plagued by a "tendency to think, and in fact to hope, that literature was about to become something else," as Robert Martin Adams wrote in a 1948 review of Wilson's *The Triple Thinkers*.[42] Adams was correct that Wilson failed in his attempts to fix his critical values in print, yet in his temporal, worldly classrooms, Wilson's account of literary value's historicity attained its full expression. From Wilson's 1942 Joyce course, we turn to his 1958 Use of Language in Literature course, which explored literature's changing capacity to reference the world. Along the way, we consider as well how his courses on Charles Dickens and Civil War journalism taught students how to transform literature into "something else." In Wilson's classrooms, we see how historical inquiry creates its own aesthetic and mode of value—one that links texts

to life experience rather than sanctifying them within a timeless canon, one that sees literary value accrue to texts as they are read and reinterpreted over time by varying readerships.

Chapter 6 turns to the archives that remain from Josephine Miles's five decades of teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. Miles was an early practitioner of quantitative and proto-computational approaches to literary study, beginning with her 1938 doctoral thesis, for which she "counted" Wordsworth's "feelings."[43] By the 1950s, Miles was collaborating with the electrical engineering lab at Berkeley to make the very first computational concordance in the humanities. Alongside this lost history of early distant reading, we consider Miles's decades of notes for teaching English 1A, Berkeley's freshman composition course. Miles taught this class as a workshop; to her mind, even the supposedly practical pedagogy of the New Critics trained at "Harvard or Yale" expressed a will to mastery she abhorred, a style in which "you ask a bunch of students to read the work and then you tell them all where they're wrong and you tell them how to really read the work."[44] We describe how Miles's focus on the sentence as foundational to composition shaped her research—research in which she pursued a method for quantifying the sentence structures of five hundred years of poetry. In turn, Miles's quantitative scholarship gave her a unique account of the value of freshman composition to society. Whereas the New Critics set literary and poetic form in opposition to scientific modes of writing and knowing, Miles believed that poems, English 1A papers, and handmade data sets all required decisions about representativeness and selection, qualification and connection. In her writing workshops, Miles taught students to write meaningfully about the world and its data from their own distinct perspective.

Chapter 7 takes our book into the 1970s, following Simon J. Ortiz, an Acoma Pueblo poet, critic, and professor, as he developed his introductory survey of Native American literature between 1977 and 1979 for the Ethnic Studies program at the College of Marin in the California community college system. A visiting instructor who had already studied and taught both literature and creative writing at several different kinds of higher-education institutions, Ortiz needed to accomplish a challenging task: constructing a syllabus that would allow him to teach an oral tradition mistakenly described as past or vanished alongside a contemporary literature that Ortiz did view as a real resurgence after a relatively silent time. As he moved from institutions serving Native American students to an institution serving a diverse group, Ortiz reckoned with how to form a literature whose meaning was tied to the everyday lives of people from a wide variety of cultures and geographies into a single-semester survey. After

teaching a first version of the course—a traditional survey that moved from pre-contact oral literature through anthropologist-mediated life writing to the present "renaissance of Native American literature"—Ortiz radically rewrote his syllabus. In his revised syllabus, each week triangulated traditional oral story, historical narrative, and contemporary fiction. This new format, inspired in part by N. Scott Momaday's acclaimed *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), replaced the traditional survey's search for an authentic, pre-contact version of an oral tradition with a vision of the last five hundred post-contact years as the center of Native American national literary tradition. Ortiz theorized this literature of survivance and continuance in his famous 1981 essay "Towards a National Indian Literature."

Our book thus draws to a close in the 1970s, famously tumultuous years for higher education in America. These years saw student-led efforts to form new programs of study, to diversify faculty and student bodies, and to expand curricular offerings. Some of the figures we profile in this book either saw, firsthand, the changes afoot or helped to enact them. Josephine Miles's students at Berkeley were heavily involved in the free speech movement; Miles redesigned class assignments around it and encouraged students to write poetry about it. By 1971 she was chairing the Ad Hoc Committee on Women in the Department at Berkeley that added a "course on women and literature" to the curriculum and took "affirmative action" to recruit women for faculty and teaching assistantships.[45] In the spring of 1969, J. Saunders Redding began teaching at George Washington University just as SDS students were occupying Maury Hall and Monroe Hall. Redding was hired to teach as part of the American Studies program, which had just separated from the English Department and commenced debating whether their junior proseminar on American intellectual history should teach students all about "Emerson and transcendentalism" or "class structure."[46] Redding and Clarence Mondale co-taught the general education course for the department that spring and organized it around the concept of "polarities": "America vs. Europe, city vs. country, black vs. white."[47] The following year, Redding became the Ernest I. White Professor of American Studies and Humane Letters at Cornell University. Cornell's Africana Studies and Research Center was founded in 1969; the number of other new Africana Studies centers and Black studies programs founded at universities across America in the following years could very nearly be tallied by the number of visiting lecturer invitations that Redding received: Rhode Island College, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Howard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Swarthmore College, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, and UMass Boston are a few of the schools whose offers he accepted, but he rejected many, many more.

Ortiz, in turn, spent the summers of 1974–76 teaching at Navajo Community College (now Diné College), the first tribal college in the United States. Later that decade he would move from the College of Marin to the University of New Mexico to become a part of the newly forming Native American Studies Center and to take over Leslie Marmon Silko's courses in the English Department after the publication and critical success of her book *Ceremony*.

It may seem, then, that our history of classroom-based literary study stops short of the era that changed everything—the era in which worldly politics finally burst in upon the hermetic classroom, the era in which disciplinary knowledges were transformed by critique. In literary study, in particular, "post-1968" serves as shorthand for a twinned opening of canon and method that we associate with the demands of identity politics, the arrival of cultural studies and continental theory, and eventually the rise of new historicism and postcolonial studies. Yet, as we show, a fuller history of how teachers and students have practiced English at all kinds of twentieth-century universities overturns our collective sense that something closed was opened in 1968 and after. The seven chapters of this book show how classrooms throughout the twentieth century have been hospitable to some of the key aspects of method and ethos that we associate with "post-1968" English. A history like this one allows us to give up—finally and forever—the idea that "traditional" English was confronted, in these decades, with what Gerald Graff called the "disruptive novelties" of "black studies, feminism, Marxism."[48] To recover the ways that our discipline has been hospitable to these texts and modes of thought is not to claim that universities throughout the twentieth century welcomed the students and teachers who incubated them, nor is it to suggest that universities today have overcome the problems of access and equity that student movements shed light on in the 1960s and '70s. Yet making our histories more reflective of the discipline's actual composition is one pathway forward. The question of how to read this history in a present moment in which legislatures, parliaments, and universities have casualized academic labor—and the labor of teaching specifically—is one we address in our conclusion.

✹ CHAPTER 1 ✹

Caroline Spurgeon, The Art of Reading (1913)

Beginnings and Beginners

Caroline Spurgeon meticulously preserved her teaching notes. Collecting them in indexed, leather-bound volumes, one per class, she identified them by embossing the course titles in gold on their spines.[1] The inky blue-black leather volumes, often with copies of the printed syllabuses pasted into the front, offer a detailed record of the classes she taught during the first decades of the twentieth century: The Age of Johnson; English Prose, 1798–1832; Shakespeare as Historian; The English Novel; English Literature, 1700–1760; Style; The Art of Reading; Poetry of World War I; Mysticism; Poetry of the Romantic Revival. Spurgeon also preserved her student notes. These notes, bound in red leather volumes of the same size and style, provide a record of courses taught by her University College London professor W. P. Ker, including Form and Style I and English Prose of the Nineteenth Century. We can track Spurgeon reusing certain passages from Ker's lectures—sometimes verbatim, sometimes transformed. In glimpsing the transmission of knowledge from Ker to Spurgeon and from Spurgeon to her own students, we also begin to understand how Spurgeon imagined future teachers might make similar use of her lectures.

Spurgeon's teaching notes endure because she viewed them as worthy of preservation, organization, and even decoration quite apart from their possible afterlives as publications. Spurgeon's lecture notes contain none of the grand pronouncements or magisterial interpretations that one might expect from such expensive-looking volumes. And while Spurgeon did occasionally deliver a fully drafted lecture on a topic like Tennyson's early work or Johnson and his era, her notes do not contain the polished prose speeches of a charismatic lecturer. More typical are the materials from her Art of Reading class, in which she spent most of the class time

✹ CHAPTER 2 ✹

T. S. Eliot, Modern English Literature (1916–19)

T. S. Eliot, we are often told, almost single-handedly shaped the twentieth-century literary canon. His dramatic reformation of critical taste, literary historians hold, began with *The Sacred Wood*. In that 1920 volume of essays, Eliot quietly replaced the major figures of English literature—William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Keats, Alfred Tennyson—with an array of minor Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights and metaphysical poets. He also introduced concepts, such as the dissociation of sensibility, that would shape anthologies and literary histories for years to come. E. M. W. Tillyard, for instance, recalls how *The Sacred Wood* inspired an entire generation of Cambridge students to turn from Romantic, expressive poetry to the metaphysical "poetry of ideas." Stefan Collini credits Eliot with establishing the midcentury's "'Holy Trinity' of poetry, drama, and the novel" and with effectively decanonizing the Victorian essayists and moralists. And critics such as Nicholas McDowell describe how *The Sacred Wood*'s once iconoclastic judgments and assertions came to determine how scholars narrate seventeenth-century literary history.[1]

But even more than Eliot's new canon, his reformation of critical method is the force that scholars feel has most powerfully determined the course of literary study in the twentieth century. As John Crowe Ransom wrote in *The New Criticism* in 1941, "One of the best things in [Eliot's] influence has been his habit of considering aesthetic effect as independent of religious effect, or moral, or political and social."[2] Indeed, many argue that *The Sacred Wood*'s anti-Romantic canon paved the way for the New Critics' redefinition of literature as impersonal and detached from the immediate circumstances of its composition.[3] John Guillory, for instance, argues that Eliot's canon reformation—Eliot's preference for minor poets (John Donne, John Dryden) over major authors (Shakespeare, Tennyson)—encoded an entirely new set of literary values. *The Sacred Wood*, Guillory says, recentered literature's authority on its ambiguity and nonreferentiality. For Guillory, English professors reaffirm these values in the "pedagogical device of close reading" when they attend to how texts mean—to their forms and figures—rather than to what they say.[4] In this sense, Shakespeare, Keats, and Tennyson may remain central to the university literature curriculum, but the way they are taught since Eliot makes them fall in line with the new canon's silent redefinition of literariness.[5]

Yet while imagining that *The Sacred Wood* determined the texts and practices of countless twentieth-century literature classrooms, scholars have overlooked the actual classroom that made *The Sacred Wood*. As Ronald Schuchard recounts, Eliot taught Modern English Literature, a three-year tutorial course, to working-class adults from 1916 to 1919.[6] The course, offered under the auspices of the University of London Joint Committee for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Working People, met on Monday evenings in Southall at the local grammar school.[7] The students included a "very intelligent grocer who reads Ruskin behind his counter" and several "(female) elementary schoolteachers, who work very hard with large classes of refractory children all day but come with unabated eagerness to get culture in the evening."[8] During their first two years together, the class worked through a collectively determined syllabus of nineteenth-century novelists, poets, historians, and social critics. For the third year of the course, Eliot's students requested Elizabethan literature. Eliot obliged, and together they came up with a syllabus that included works by Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, Robert Greene, Shakespeare, John Webster, Ben Jonson, and Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. In the spring of 1919, Eliot turned his work from the tutorial's third year into a series of book reviews on early modern literature. Six of these reviews would become essays or part of essays in *The Sacred Wood*.

In order to reveal how Eliot's Modern English Literature tutorial shaped *The Sacred Wood*, we reconstruct the class's social life and institutional contexts. Unlike the two large lecture-based extension courses Eliot also taught in these years—an eleven-week course, Tendencies in Contemporary French Thought, in Yorkshire through the Oxford Extension Delegacy in 1916 and a twenty-five-week course on Victorian literature at Sydenham for the London City Council in 1917—Modern English Literature convened a small group of students for three years of intensive, discussion-based study. The course's tutorial format derived from the demands of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) for forms of extension education that would give working-class students a central

role in knowledge production and a forum in which to share their experiences and knowledge. As Albert Mansbridge, president of the WEA, put it, "The relation of tutor and student in a University Tutorial Class . . . is entirely different from the ordinary relationship of teacher and pupil. The teacher is in real fact a fellow-student, and the fellow-students are teachers."[9] Following the tutorial format, the students of Modern English Literature took a lead role in selecting their tutor, choosing course topics, setting reading lists, determining the amount of time the class spent on each author, and conducting individual research. In his first end-of-year report, Eliot described the class as "experimental and tentative."[10] Whereas the audiences for his lecture courses were "extremely intelligent but somewhat passive," he found his tutorial students more engaging. As he wrote to his father, "Monday evening is one of the moments of the week that I look forward to. The class is very keen and very appreciative, and very anxious to learn and to think."[11]

The materials that remain from Modern English Literature show that Eliot was anxious to learn as well. Eliot's syllabuses, lecturer's reports, letters, and notes provide a record of how he adapted his teaching to the tutorial form and to the WEA's ethos of equal exchange. Over the course of the tutorial's three years, Eliot revised his syllabuses in response to his students' interests and requests, and adjusted assignments to the pace of their work schedules. This required structural changes. Specifically, Eliot jettisoned the format of his first-year syllabus, which had moved chronologically through disconnected studies of representative authors, to offer instead a densely interconnected syllabus that foregrounded the material working conditions of past writers. As he explained in his reports, this new organization served the practical purpose of encouraging his busy students to pursue sustained research with the confidence that their work would remain relevant to class discussion over the course of several weeks. Like other WEA tutors, Eliot learned how to shift the gravity of his course so that Modern English Literature approximated a dialogical exchange rather than a hierarchical dissemination of culture or knowledge.

As Modern English Literature became more and more communal, the class developed a vision of literary history that placed workers at its center. The class's movement away from a syllabus of solitary geniuses to a syllabus peopled by men and women who used source texts, wrote for audiences, adopted influences, manipulated conventions, and collaborated with peers reflects not only Eliot's pedagogical strategizing but also the class's burgeoning literary values—specifically, their valuation of authorship as work. Returning to the material practices of writing—newly revealed as imitative, repetitive, sometimes paid or patronized—allowed

Eliot and his working-class students to draw connections between the tutorial course's own sociality and the social lives and working practices of the writers they studied. Together, the class came to prize workaday writers like John Ruskin and John Dryden—writers whose uneven work became valuable not for its formal perfection but for the way it enabled the future work of other writers. This model of literary value as continued, collective work—made in Eliot's classroom and enshrined in *The Sacred Wood*—derives, we argue, from the WEA. When we set the three years' worth of materials from Modern English Literature in the context of other WEA extension tutorials offered in these same years, the influence of that tutorial on both the thematic concerns and the literary values of *The Sacred Wood* snaps into focus.

Our ability to reconstruct the effects that Eliot's extension tutorial had on *The Sacred Wood*—and thus on some of the discipline's core theoretical conceptions—depends on the University of London's preservation of the syllabuses, course descriptions, lecturer's reports, and graded assignments of courses taught under the auspices of the Joint Committee for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Working People. The survival of so many of these documents is unusual, yet even when these materials exist, they are often ignored by disciplinary historians. As Jonathan Rose and Alexandra Lawrie have argued, historians of education as well as major disciplinary historians of English like Terry Eagleton and Chris Baldick have caricatured extension schools as simple ideological state apparatuses[12] without examining archival evidence for what happened in their classrooms—evidence that shows, in some cases, how extension classes created many of the central practices and methods of our discipline.[13] Lawrie, for example, credits literature extension lecturers such as R. G. Moulton with devising the method of "inductive criticism"— a formalist approach "that dispensed with issues of canonicity or literary reputation"—decades prior to the invention of New Critical close reading.[14] Rose likewise hints at how the working-class students in these courses affected the development of disciplinary methods and knowledge, particularly in the discipline of history.[15] Turning to extension tutors and their students, in other words, does more than supplement or diversify existing histories of literary study; it requires that we radically rewrite them.

Extension Education and the Tutorial Course

Before we can reconstruct how Eliot and his students read Elizabethan literature in the year before *The Sacred Wood* appeared, we must first

describe how the ethos and practices of working-class extension education shaped Eliot's teaching. By the time Eliot began teaching extension education courses in 1916, the university extension movement in England was more than fifty years old, with an established if flexible set of conventions for convening and running courses in local centers around the country.[16] From its beginnings, university extension developed through partnerships among local centers, workers' groups, religious organizations, charismatic individuals, city boards, and university bodies. As Lawrence Goldman writes, the movement "has no easy and obvious delineations, no clear and unambiguous margins; it spills across educational and institutional boundaries."[17]

Though extension schools worked in concert with universities, in the early twentieth century the extension movement positioned itself as fundamentally at odds with the university as an institution. Parent universities may have considered their extension programs peripheral, but the WEA countered that extension school students made major contributions to the production of knowledge. They further argued that Oxford and the University of London needed working-class students much more than working-class students needed them. John Burrows, in his history of adult education at the University of London, offers an anecdote that captures the disagreement: when the WEA president, Mansbridge, challenged the assumption that extension students enrolled to receive knowledge, R. B. Haldane, chairman of the Royal Commission on University Education in London, asked pedagogically, "Well, of course, a university is a body that imparts knowledge?" Mansbridge replied, "And may I venture to say that it receives it—students [from tutorial classes] may go right beyond the university degree, dealing with first class research."[18] Indeed, the WEA maintained that only through an "education devised by working men in company with scholars" would the disciplines produce a usable account of England's national past and future. "The movement," Mansbridge wrote, "has linked up the experience of Universities with the experience of life outside."[19]

The WEA thus rejected the idea that extension courses merely disseminated existing knowledge downward. It also suggested that the collective social relations of knowledge production in the extension school were as important as the knowledge produced. "Tutorial classes," Mansbridge wrote, "are less than nothing if they concern themselves merely with the acquisition or dissemination of knowledge. They are in reality concerned with the complete development of those who compose them, and indeed of the common life."[20] Such collective ideals were shared by the first wave of tutorial students,[21] who explicitly rejected the proposed

model whereby the most talented among them would receive prizes and admission to parent universities.[22] Whereas parent universities saw university extension as a "ladder" that individual students might climb, rung by rung, into the upper regions of the university proper, the WEA argued that universities and their extension programs together already formed a "highway of education"—a broad path linking several locations by which one could reach a variety of destinations.[23]

The classroom archive verifies these two hallmarks of the extension tutorials: a deeply collaborative ethos and a curriculum that positioned working adults as coparticipants in the discovery of unrecorded knowledge. Records show that before the tutor even set foot in the classroom, tutorials were convened through a process of negotiation: tutors offered a list of proposed courses, and the students at a local center would choose a topic.[24] The extension delegacy would compare the tutors' offerings with the interests submitted by students and offer a tutor to a group of students for approval. Tutor and students then spent their weeks and months together reading a subject that they had collaboratively chosen. The contingent arrangement of tutorial topics was not merely a convenient mechanism; it was an expression of core extension school values mandating that social relations and students' interests, not a fixed topic imposed by a tutor or institution, should lead the formation of a tutorial.

Extension organizations published syllabuses for the chosen classes through their associated university's press.[25] More public than teaching documents are usually imagined to be, these printed syllabuses acted as advertisements to potential students and guides to enrolled ones, as well as records designed to inform the wider public about the extension school's work. They were also part of an important archive, annually bound into volumes that helped record the extension school's history. But despite their printed form, extension school syllabuses were flexible documents, responsive to the changing needs of the class and to the necessary indeterminacy of the twenty-four-week lecture series or the three-year tutorial. For extension students not only collaborated with teachers to determine curricula and course offerings; they also helped create reading lists and weekly topics.

Extension school syllabuses draw attention to their own contingency. The headnote to Alice Davies's 1913–14 syllabus for Some Writers of the XIXth Century and After explains that the lectures make "no attempt to deal fully with any of the three periods treated. The subjects have been chosen by the students and tutors jointly, purely on the basis of their inclinations." The syllabus for B. L. K. Henderson's tutorial Aspects of Victorian Literature (1919–21) remarks that after the first year, "the class will be

in a position to discuss whether it wishes to go further into the treasury of the same period, to ascertain the relationship of Victorian writers to those of an earlier period, or to those who have followed in their footsteps." Mabel Atkinson's syllabus for Social History of England from 1860 (1911–12) notes that her course's method of combining industrial history with economic theory was developed in response to her students, who "desired to study the economic development of England from 1760 and at the same time wished to acquire the elements of economic history."[26]

Flexibility around course topics was possible because, unlike traditional university courses, extension classes were not offered as part of a sequenced curriculum. Course topics often reflected, instead, contemporary relevance or student interest. R. St. John Parry explained in 1920 that "it is natural that a class of mothers should begin with 'The History of the Home'; that a class of young conscripts from the woolen trade of Yorkshire should be found interested in the study of wool, its history and its treatment; that economics and the history of industry should be the favourite subjects of Tutorial Classes for working men."[27] Industrial and economic history courses were common,[28] as were courses exploring the present state of the working class, such as Gilbert Slater's The Worker and the State or J. Lionel Tayler's The Condition of the People.[29] Courses featured contemporary social issues; reading lists often included recent publications such as Maria Montessori's *The Montessori Method* (1912), W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Emilia Kanthack's *The Preservation of Infant Life* (1907), Beckles Willson's *The Story of Rapid Transit* (1903), and C. S. Myers's *A Text-Book of Experimental Psychology* (1909). Syllabuses reveal how tutors incorporated new knowledge into their course plans; M. Epstein, who taught his Descriptive Economics tutorial several times in the 1910s, added new lectures such as "The Cash Nexus" in response to theoretical developments or student demands.[30] During World War I, many courses sprang up to cover aspects of the conflict, including R. H. U. Bloor's Ideals and Issues of the Present Struggle (1917), Mabel Palmer's Problems of Social Economics Arising from the War (1916), Mordaunt Shairp's The Literary Inspiration of the Great War (1919), and Arnold Freeman's The Economic Problems of Demobilisation (1916), which Freeman taught at Southall, down the hall from Eliot's Modern English Literature.[31]

Extension courses also invited students to create knowledge by incorporating various kinds of research-based classwork.[32] Historians of extension education tend to focus on data about the small proportion of tutorial students who completed the fortnightly papers required to receive course credit.[33] Such data was submitted in lecturer's reports and

preserved in the board records of extension schools, but syllabuses tell a different story about what constituted coursework. From fieldwork to oral presentations to at-home experiments to archival research, extension students completed a wide range of activities never documented by institutional record keeping. S. S. Brierley's 1917–18 psychology course asked students "to keep note-books for practical work, in which will be recorded both the experiments performed in class and those carried out at home."[34] Caroline Spurgeon took her Age of Johnson students to the British Museum to conduct original manuscript research, as described in the previous chapter. Tayler's course Life in the Home taught students "how to keep a life-album" on the model of Francis Galton. R. P. Farley's three-year tutorial in sociology began in 1911 with the yearlong course Poverty: Suggested Causes and Remedies, in which students made "visits of observation" designed "to bring the members of the class into actual touch with the problems discussed and with various methods of dealing with them." E. H. Pringle's Modern Economic Problems course, offered in 1912–13, included student presentations on farming, "investment of trade union funds," and the minimum wage, which drew on personal experience as the beginning of research.[35]

In many cases, extension courses advanced directly to firsthand research and independent study in acknowledgment—rather than willful ignorance—of students' busy work lives. In his lecturer's report for The Life of the Nineteenth Century as Represented in Literature (1914), A. A. Jack describes the "attemptive atmosphere" of his class, in which "everyone was trying to get something out of it and to make use of what was being put before them." His "chiefly poor" students, Jack wrote, "take much interest, work with energy in their spare time, and made very marked progress," quickly coming to "strongly express their desire to have more detailed study of particular authors."[36] Like Jack, Eliot encouraged his students to proceed directly to deep reading precisely because their work lives often prevented them from keeping up with the syllabus. In his lecturer's report for the first year of Modern English Literature, Eliot wrote, "I ask the students all to read some particular work on the current author, in order that there may always be a common basis for discussion; but when (as is usually the case), a student has very little time, I recommend further reading of one author in whom the student is interested, rather than a smattering of all." He also requested that the library obtain copies of books, such as "Mill's *Utilitarianism*, or Renan's *Life of Jesus* . . . and also a few historical works covering the period" that were not on the course reading list but would be of interest to his students.[37] Eliot's dismissal of the kind of class that would offer students a uniform

"smattering" of culture echoes extension education's promise to critique and expand disciplinary knowledge rather than simply transmit it.

These untallied instances of research-based classwork point toward the WEA's internal standards for judging the effectiveness of its courses. Distinct from parent universities' bureaucratic attention to the quantity and quality of papers submitted by credit-earning students, the WEA measured the success or failure of a university extension course by the collective life that the course engendered. Mansbridge described the range of social formations that emerged in parallel to the tutorials: gatherings of students' families and friends, preparatory seminars to get potential future students up to speed while they waited for a course opening, essay circles, and weekend study groups. And there were many senses in which tutorials might "carry on their work beyond the three years" formally allotted to them.[38] Extension boards and delegacies tracked how many students went on to write for local newspapers or take further courses; they recorded how many tutorials kept their original composition and moved on as a group to a new subject.[39] In some cases, students extended the life of the tutorial by becoming (unpaid) tutors themselves. The members of a tutorial at Longton, Industrial History of England, traveled to surrounding villages to teach the material to new groups of working people; a group of Yorkshire manual workers finished their tutorial and commenced teaching short courses; and tutorial students in North Staffordshire began their own local education program. Though the term "extension education" came from the idea of extending the central research university's mission outward to reach "the people," in practice the idea of the "extension" of knowledge through collective social life came to characterize the work and study of the students themselves.

Turning to Eliot's Modern English Literature syllabuses, we will show how the values of the WEA tutorial transformed his teaching over the course of the class's three years. Eliot's pedagogy—his shift to an emphasis on self-guided research, his willingness to revise readings and assignments to follow his students' interests, and his focus on creating conditions that enabled his students to have a sustained investment in course topics in the second and third years of the course—testify to his absorption of the WEA's tested practices and general ethos. These practices also increasingly informed the vision of literary culture that Eliot developed in his tutorial and in his writing. Drawing on historicist approaches to literature that emphasized the interconnections between writers, Eliot taught his students to recognize the everyday working conditions under which authors wrote; together, the class developed an idea of literature as a collective cultural enterprise rather than a series of great works by

great figures. By importing the WEA's values into the scene of literary study, Eliot created the conditions in which his students could recognize themselves in the working writers of the literary past.

Eliot in the Classroom

Like the leaders of the extension movement, Eliot had a vexed relationship to the modern research university. In August 1916, just a month before he began teaching his first two extension courses, Eliot elected not to return to Harvard to take up an assistant professorship. Gail McDonald imagines how difficult this decision must have been for Eliot, given his family's multigenerational devotion to education.[40] But entering the world of British extension education let him reject the American system of formal education and the life scripted for him within it while joining an educational institution of a very different kind. The first in a series of dissenting institutions that Eliot affiliated with over the course of his career, the extension school allowed Eliot to act as a source of culture for schoolteachers, copy clerks, and the occasional grocer while occupying a position at once marginal and central—marginal to the world of the Oxford or Cambridge common room but central to the extension school movement's reimagination of the national system of higher education.

Eliot's syllabuses for his three-year Modern English Literature tutorial let us tell the story of his growing affiliation with the dissenting institution of the WEA. Receptive to the WEA's animating belief that working-class students could make culture rather than merely receive it, Eliot learned to adapt the pace and topics of his tutorials to give his students a guiding role. The syllabuses themselves evidence these ongoing adjustments. While the first year focused on a series of Victorian authors in the style of the accustomed university literature survey class, the headnote to the syllabus explains that the course is "organized by topic rather than by lecture," giving the class flexibility to linger on some authors and skim over others, rather than binding a given author to a particular week.[41] After covering Tennyson, Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle, John Henry Newman, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, minor novelists (Benjamin Disraeli, Thomas Love Peacock, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope), the Brontës, and George Borrow, the tutorial moved on to Ruskin and there remained, giving up the syllabus's final weeks on Edward Fitzgerald and George Meredith to linger with Ruskin, taking time to consider him both as a "stylist" and a "social and moral reformer."[42] It seems likely that the "four evenings" the class spent on Ruskin would have drawn on Eliot's students' work experiences

and worldviews; their decision to forgo the planned final weeks on Fitzgerald and Meredith shows how the students decided together as a class what they valued and thus how they would spend their time.[43]

The second year's syllabus even more clearly reflects the needs and interests of Eliot's students, who asked Eliot if they could "start with Emerson," which they did, in a course that otherwise exclusively covered British literature of the late nineteenth century.[44] After Ralph Waldo Emerson, the class moved to William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Walter Pater, Samuel Butler, and Robert Louis Stevenson and then closed with "The 'Nineties,'" Thomas Hardy, and a concluding week comparing "the later part of the nineteenth century with the earlier."[45] As this list suggests, the scope of the second-year syllabus had been reduced: it contains only nine authors or topics, as compared with the fifteen that Eliot proposed for the first year. This syllabus is also more interconnected: Morris, Pater, and Rossetti are all considered in relation to Ruskin, and Swinburne in relation to the preceding figures. Eliot's lecturer's reports indicate that he was emphasizing connections among these authors to enable students to write more papers. After a first year in which only three students had completed papers, Eliot thought that he might reorganize the course around "subjects" rather than individual authors:

> I do not wish to slight the personal element, but if the course can be arranged on the basis of subjects—instead of passing from one man to another, I think more papers would be written; as the members are deterred by thinking that before they can read a book and write about it, the author will have been dropped.[46]

Eliot also included a list of potential paper topics at the end of the second-year syllabus, including "Emerson and His Circle," "Socialism in Literature," "Art for Art's Sake," "Medieval Influence in Poetry and Prose," "Naturalism," "The Celtic Revival," and "The Drama." At the head of this list of paper topics, Eliot promises that these "subjects will be proposed in connection with each lecture" so that students can "plan three or more papers on related subjects."[47]

Over the course of the first two years of Modern English Literature, then, Eliot began to imagine a tutorial in which interconnected subjects replaced authors. His third-year syllabus on Elizabethan literature turned this corner. Structured around the cultural histories, collaborations, and literary forms that reveal the connections among authors, the third-year Modern English Literature syllabus entirely dispenses with the movement from "one man to another" in favor of reanimating a literary culture

in which Elizabethan dramatists emerge as working writers for the audience of Eliot's working-class students.

This reimagining of the canon of early modern literature as a kind of writers' workshop seems like an inspired bit of teaching, but it was also the practical response to the impasse at which Eliot and his students arrived at the end of their second year together. The first two years' syllabuses had proceeded chronologically through nineteenth-century British literature, and the students seem to have expected that the third year's syllabus would cover contemporary literature. Eliot, however, did "not favour" the study of "living authors."[48] When his students requested a year on Elizabethan literature as their second choice, Eliot happily acceded. What excited him most about the prospect, he explained to his mother, was the opportunity to revalue a literature that had been continuously respected but never effectively judged: "My Southall people want to do Elizabethan Literature next year which would interest me more than what we have done before, and would be of some use to me too, as I want to write some essays on the dramatists, who have never been properly criticised."[49] These essays eventually became part of *The Sacred Wood*.

The Sacred Wood's central exhortation is to rescue works that have been more esteemed than read; instead of approaching them in a "canonical spirit," Eliot urges readers to recover their "living force."[50] Behind *The Sacred Wood*'s revaluation of Elizabethan literature (especially the dramatists) is the work of the third year of Modern English Literature, in which Eliot taught Elizabethan literature not just in place of the requested contemporary literature syllabus, but as a contemporary literature. The picture of the Elizabethans as "living authors" that Eliot invented in response to the desires of his extension school students became the foundation of *The Sacred Wood*'s imagination of Elizabethan literature.

For Eliot, historical facts could reanimate dead literature. When he later looked back on his years of extension teaching in "The Function of Criticism," Eliot remembered the methods he used to help his students criticize early modern drama. In particular, he emphasized how historical information could lead students to the "right liking" of bygone literature. If he presented students "with a selection of the simpler kind of facts about a work—its conditions, its setting, its genesis," Eliot noted, Elizabethan drama could come to seem as immediate as a recently published poem.[51] *The Sacred Wood* likewise emphasizes the role of historical knowledge in evaluation. In his essay "Euripides and Professor Murray," for instance, Eliot describes how recent anthropological scholarship, by making the past "as present to us as the present," allows readers to form fresh critical opinions about long-dead authors: "If Pindar bores us, we

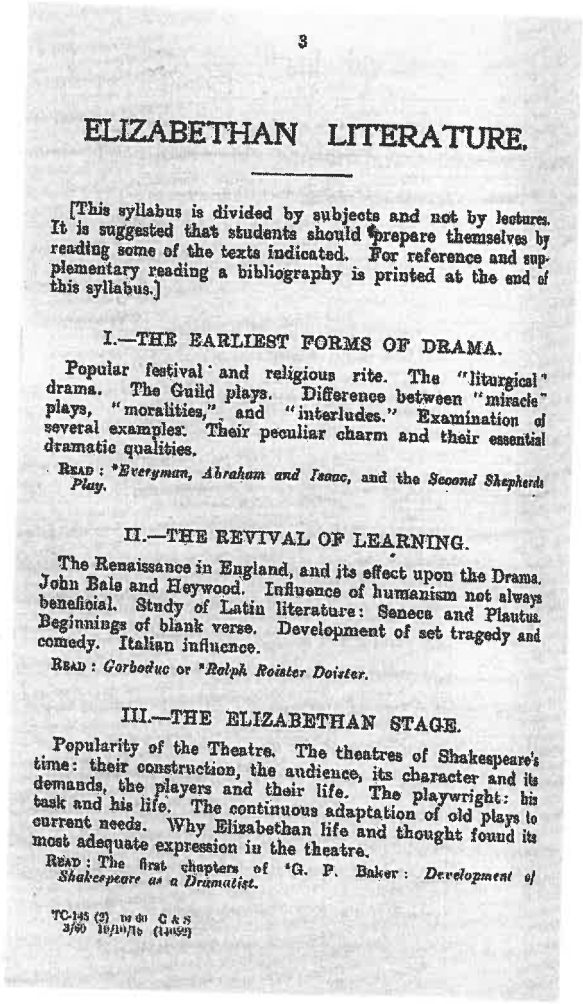
admit it; we are not certain that Sappho was *very* much greater than Catullus; we hold various opinions about Vergil; and we think more highly of Petronius than our grandfathers did."[52]

Eliot may have recalled his role in the extension classroom as that of a guide presenting facts to his students, but his letters from the extension years suggest that the biographical and historical information with which he peppered his lectures sometimes put him on unnervingly equal footing with his students. In 1917, while he was teaching Modern English Literature at Southall and lecturing on Victorian literature at Sydenham through the London City Council, Eliot wrote a self-deprecating letter home about his newfound talent for assembling the sorts of "superficial information" about authors that his students already had:

> Lately I have been at a point in my lectures where the material was unfamiliar to me: I have had to get up the Brontës for one course and Stevenson for the other. Of course I have developed a knack of acquiring superficial information at short notice, and they think me a prodigy of information. But some of the old ladies are extraordinarily learned, and know all sorts of things about the private life of worthies, where they went to school, and why their elder brother failed in business, which I have never bothered my head about.[53]

Here, Eliot's students augment his hastily gathered facts with the kind of tidbits one might cull from late Victorian–style literary gossip columns and journalistic lives of authors. Tutor and students volley bits of information—rapidly collected from several sources, cut adrift from a body of ordered knowledge—that are typically circulated among those who have difficulty judging what is worth putting and keeping in one's head. Yet in the tutorial, these "simpler kinds of facts" do not mark the absence of critical judgment. Instead, they become a preparation for it, helping convert authors from revered figures of the English literary tradition into knowable, everyday writers whose lives and times can be discovered in local libraries, or even in the kinds of superannuated periodicals one might find in a coffeehouse or railway waiting room.

Eliot's liberal use in lectures of authorial biography, scenes of writing, composition techniques, and the critical chatter that amounts to literary reputation not only drew on the kinds of knowledge his students already possessed but also reached out to students by moving the focus from the forbiddingly aura-laden work to the more familiar worker. In the third-year syllabus for Modern English Literature, Eliot reconstructed the world in which poets and playwrights wrote, surrounded by their varied source



3

ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE.

[This syllabus is divided by subjects and not by lectures. It is suggested that students should prepare themselves by reading some of the texts indicated. For reference and supplementary reading a bibliography is printed at the end of this syllabus.]

I.—THE EARLIEST FORMS OF DRAMA.

Popular festival and religious rite. The "liturgical" drama. The Guild plays. Difference between "miracle" plays, "moralities," and "interludes." Examination of several examples. Their peculiar charm and their essential dramatic qualities.

READ: **Everyman, Abraham and Isaac*, and the *Second Shepherds Play*.

II.—THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING.

The Renaissance in England, and its effect upon the Drama. John Bale and Heywood. Influence of humanism not always beneficial. Study of Latin literature: Seneca and Plautus. Beginnings of blank verse. Development of set tragedy and comedy. Italian influence.

READ: *Gorboduc* or **Ralph Roister Doister*.

III.—THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE.

Popularity of the Theatre. The theatres of Shakespeare's time: their construction, the audience, its character and its demands, the players and their life. The playwright: his task and his life. The continuous adaptation of old plays to current needs. Why Elizabethan life and thought found its most adequate expression in the theatre.

READ: The first chapters of *G. P. Baker: *Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist*.

TC-145 (2) w 60 C & S
3/60 10/10/18 (11052)

FIGURE 2.1. The first page of T. S. Eliot's third-year syllabus (1918) for his Modern English Literature course, taught under the auspices of the Joint Committee for the Promotion of the Higher Education of Working People, University of London. Eliot revised his syllabuses in the second and third years of the three-year course in response to his students' interests and requests. Senate House Library, EM 6/6/5, University of London.

materials, collaborators, influences, and daily pressures. Eliot designed the first weeks of the syllabus to conjure up the Elizabethan playwrights' world, starting with popular festivals and religious rites as the earliest forms of drama, followed by a section on the classical tradition and other influences on drama. Another early unit took up the material world of the

Elizabethan stage. In it, Eliot and his students covered stage construction, audience demands, and the playwright's "continuous adaptation of old plays to current needs."[54] Reading George Pierce Baker's *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (1907) set the scene for understanding the collaborative working life of Elizabethan dramatists and enabled Eliot's students to see Shakespeare as being of his time.

After these opening weeks on the source material and social life of Elizabethan drama, the class moved on to a set of interconnected weeks on Elizabethan playwrights, taking up several playwrights each week to trace influences, compare different examples of a single genre, and view collaborations. The class read Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* alongside *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet* to compare different examples of the tragedy of blood and to contrast treatments of stock situations. They studied Greene and Peele alongside Marlowe, as playwrights influenced by Marlowe's style. In a week on "The Chronicle Play," the class read *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* with *Richard III* and *Henry VI* to glimpse the "traces of Marlowe, Peele, Greene, and Shakespeare" in that unattributed play.[55] From a first year dominated by single-author figures to a final year that sought connections among authors in the material contexts of their world, Eliot's syllabuses demonstrate his iterative development of an approach to teaching literary history that demystified great authors to reveal them as working writers.

The critical judgments that anchor *The Sacred Wood* fully emerge in the final weeks of the third-year syllabus. Eliot's descriptions under each heading become lengthier and the language becomes noticeably evaluative: "greatest," "highest point," "beauty," "greatness." These markers of highest praise are awarded not to Shakespeare but to Ben Jonson, George Chapman, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, and John Webster. Yet even in this turn from historical contextualism to evaluation, Eliot deemphasizes the final, polished literary work and the singular author. The greatness of these lesser-known writers can be found, for Eliot, in the scene rather than in the complete play; it is fully realized only in the collective literary culture, not in any individual. Despite the fact that "the greatest of Shakespeare's followers is undoubtedly John Webster," Eliot describes Webster's greatness as specific to subgenre: "his skill in dealing with horror; the beauty of his verse." Instead of offering exemplary individuals who are complete models of greatness, these post-Shakespearean playwrights are great as a collective effort toward the perfection of a particular form: "Each of the later dramatists has some unique quality, and in them English blank verse reaches its highest point."[56]

Coming in the final weeks of the three years that Eliot and his tutorial students spent together, this culminating vision of a set of unheralded playwrights whose value becomes apparent only when viewed as a collective takes on shades of the WEA's conviction that the value of tutorials becomes most apparent not in local records of individual papers submitted but in the context of the "common life."[57] This ethos of extension education emerges as an explicitly literary value in *The Sacred Wood*, in which Eliot famously turns from great works to minor authors, whose uneven and collaborative work on existing literary forms enabled subsequent writers to continue the work of making literature.

Southall in The Sacred Wood

When Modern English Literature ended in the spring of 1919, Eliot's students gave him a copy of *The Oxford Book of English Verse* inscribed "with the gratitude and appreciation of the students of the Southall Tutorial Literature Class May 1919."[58] Eliot spent the next several months transforming his lecture materials into book reviews, publishing thirteen reviews of criticism and scholarship on early modern literature by the spring of 1920. Six of these reviews would become essays in *The Sacred Wood*, including "A Romantic Aristocrat," "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama," "Hamlet and His Problems," "Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe," "Ben Jonson," and "Philip Massinger." In other essays of *The Sacred Wood*, figures from the early modern syllabus—Marlowe, Sir Thomas Elyot, Lyly, Webster, and Middleton—reappear.

Initial reviewers of *The Sacred Wood* were unaware of the extension classroom in which Eliot had most recently read this minor canon of poets and dramatists. To them, the essays' turn from major and beloved authors to more minor ones seemed elitist. They saw in Eliot's manner "the traces of a superior attitude,"[59] "the coolness of the dandy and the air of a man of science,"[60] the censoriousness of "the traditional Plymouth Brother,"[61] and "the detachment of the great surgeon."[62] Eliot, they imagined, was setting an impossibly high critical standard. As one critic put it, "He assumes that art, in the sense of work of 'eternal intensity,' is something rare, exquisite, requiring intelligence for its apprehension, and indeed never understood save by a select minority."[63] And where early reviewers saw Eliot sequestering literature away in a laboratory, an exclusive heaven, or a surgical theater, modern-day critics have figured Eliot's beautiful prison as the classroom. Disciplinary historians like Guillory have suggested that Eliot's new canon gave birth to a specifically academic style of literary reading particularly associated with the classroom—a style of reading

that attends exclusively to literary technique and form and forgets that literary texts were written in and about an everyday world.[64]

But understanding Eliot's extension school teaching opens an entirely different reading of *The Sacred Wood*. That volume's characteristic gesture—its rejection of the major authors to which literary culture pays lip service and its appreciation of the subtler virtues of more workaday writers—draws on the WEA's attempts to revise authoritative, disciplinary knowledge by incorporating working-class history and experiences. When Eliot asserts, in those essays, that not all old literature is good literature—when in "The Perfect Critic" he faults Arnold for treating the masters of the past as "canonical literature" or in "Ben Jonson" describes Jonson as more admired than read—he refers almost directly to his own refusal to offer his busy students a mere "smattering" of culture with a reading list composed of long-admired major authors.[65] Likewise, *The Sacred Wood*'s appreciation of how historicism prepares past works for fresh judgment expresses lessons Eliot learned during the three-year transformation of his syllabuses from an inert set of representative writers to an Elizabethan world of "living authors." "We need an eye," Eliot writes in *The Sacred Wood*, "which can see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present."[66]

The minor canon of *The Sacred Wood*, like the literary world Eliot conjured in his classroom, relies on a communal vision of a literary past and future. This world is peopled not by great authors, but by scholars, editors, readers, critics, and translators of variable abilities. The works that Eliot commends in *The Sacred Wood* are those written with no eye to posterity but rather for the immediate use of other writers in the tradition. The greatness of these works derives not from their enduring, transhistorical formal properties but from their connectivity. They represent an incremental improvement of literary forms borrowed from previous authors; the uneven quality of their work invites future writers to take up the pen to improve on them. In this way, Philip Massinger "prepared the way for Dryden," while in Dryden resides the last "living criticism" of Jonson.[67] This principle of valuing works that allow for literary culture's continuation—a principle that informs, for example, Eliot's favoring of Dryden, through whom many lines flow, over "the Chinese Wall of Milton," after which blank verse suffers "retrogression"[68]—mirrors the WEA's rejection of individualized accreditation and its valuation of tutorials for the cultural formations they engendered.

The WEA's "highway" of education thus guided Eliot's creation of a genealogy of minor poets who constitute the literary tradition. Eliot also

borrowed from his tutorial a way of valuing the works of these minor figures. The seminar's circulation of the "simpler kind of facts about a work" from teacher to student as well as from student to teacher resurfaces in *The Sacred Wood*'s treatment of information as necessary to literature's flourishing.[69] Indeed, Eliot's rejection of the Romantics in *The Sacred Wood* stems from this principle. According to him, the Romantics "did not know enough"; their literary production "proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient material to work with."[70] Depending on the supremacy of individual genius, they worked without the aid of "second-order minds"—that is, without the help of those critics who were numerous and unburdened enough to "digest the heavy food of historical and scientific knowledge" through which the literary past becomes present and usable.[71] *The Sacred Wood* is full of admiration for the paratextual apparatus of mediocre critics: the appendixes to George Cruikshank's essay on Massinger "are as valuable as the essay itself," Charles Whibley's introduction to Thomas Urquhart's *Rabelais* "contains all the irrelevant information about that writer which is what is wanted to stimulate a taste for him," and Professor Murray may be an awful translator of classical poetry but is thanked for bringing us "closer" to the classics through the medium of historical scholarship.[72] Just as the Modern English Literature tutorial saw Eliot drawing on the kinds of information circulated by editors, scholars, and biographers and welcoming his students' fluency in bits of fact as preparatory to taste formation, so does *The Sacred Wood* recognize the value of the preparatory, informational work of criticism.

And just as Eliot's tutorial used bits of information to open up a vision of past authors as working writers, *The Sacred Wood* draws on historical and biographical information to call up the sociality of writing practices. Eliot describes Marlowe "with the Aeneid in front of him" writing *Dido* "to order" and imagines Jonson composing *The Masques of Blackness* in tandem with Inigo Jones designing its scenery.[73] In his essay on Massinger, Eliot argues, "To understand Elizabethan drama it is necessary to study a dozen playwrights at once, to dissect with all care the complex growth, to ponder collaboration to the utmost line."[74] Using textual collation techniques to track revision practices, Eliot debunks myths of literary genius and the spontaneous creation of formally perfect works by revealing the incremental labor that goes into the creation of a poem or play. Examining examples of Marlowe's self-revision and his borrowing from Edmund Spenser, Eliot explains that, "somewhat contrary to usual opinion," Marlowe was not a genius but "a deliberate and conscious workman."[75] Indeed, when Eliot does esteem a Romantic—as in the case of William Blake—it is because textual scholars had dispelled Blake's self-mythologizing to

reveal the conscious work of revision evident in his drafts: though "Blake believed much of his writing to be automatic," his manuscripts express that a "meticulous care in composition is everywhere apparent in the poems preserved in rough draft . . . alteration on alteration, rearrangement after rearrangement, deletions, additions, and inversions."[76] This insistent emphasis threaded throughout *The Sacred Wood*, not just on writers as careful and meticulous craftspeople but on the everyday, laborious work of writing "to order" as "workmen" in groups, has its origins in Eliot's ad hoc attempt to enable the incremental work of his own students through reanimating the working practices and conditions of Elizabethan writers for them. Tracing this pedagogy into *The Sacred Wood* reveals how the momentary work of the classroom grows into a theory of literature.

In *The Sacred Wood*, of course, as in the Modern English Literature classroom, the gathering of information that reanimates the working lives of writers is not its own end; it is the preparation for critical judgment. Yet in neither book nor tutorial is critical judgment atemporal, objective, or fixed. The social life of the WEA seminar served for Eliot as an education in taste and the materiality and temporality of aesthetic judgment. In *The Sacred Wood*, these lessons reappear in Eliot's sense that certain books, such as Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, are valuable in different ways at different moments of a life span, and how additional life experience can reorient one's relationship to a major text. In the introduction to *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot explains that though "the faults and foibles of Matthew Arnold are no less evident to me now than twelve years ago, after my first admiration for him; but I hope that now, on rereading some of his prose with more care, I can better appreciate his position."[77] Throughout *The Sacred Wood* remain traces of his early classroom's sense that the arc of one's life and one's momentary and changing circumstances necessarily and meaningfully shape valid critical judgments.

But above all, the Modern English Literature tutorial is present in *The Sacred Wood*'s conviction that people make literary value. Eliot's call to transform canonical texts into the "living force" of literature is for him a necessarily social endeavor. Like the classroom in which this transformation began, Eliot's essays do not transmit a singular set of literary values. Instead, they maintain a varied world in which thousands of small exchanges between writers and readers, editors and teachers and students, climb inside poems and plays; only later do these social exchanges come to seem to emanate from literary works themselves. In Eliot's extension school classroom, we find the lived origins of what calcified into our received idea of the Eliotic canon. But by expanding our understanding of where literary study has actually happened to include classrooms like

Eliot's, we can see how canons are made rather than merely received. Now, in a moment in which literary study threatens to become the exclusive property of elite and private universities alone, we must build and preserve accounts of how classrooms at institutions of all kinds have discovered our core methods and made our critical classics. This is true not only of *The Sacred Wood*, but also of I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism*—one of the subjects of our next chapter.