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The Teaching Archive: A New History For Literary Study

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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 teach-

ers. 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 per-

haps 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 dilettantes or generalists with no compelling model of literary research or scholarship.¹⁶ For Gullory, 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 experi-

ence.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,

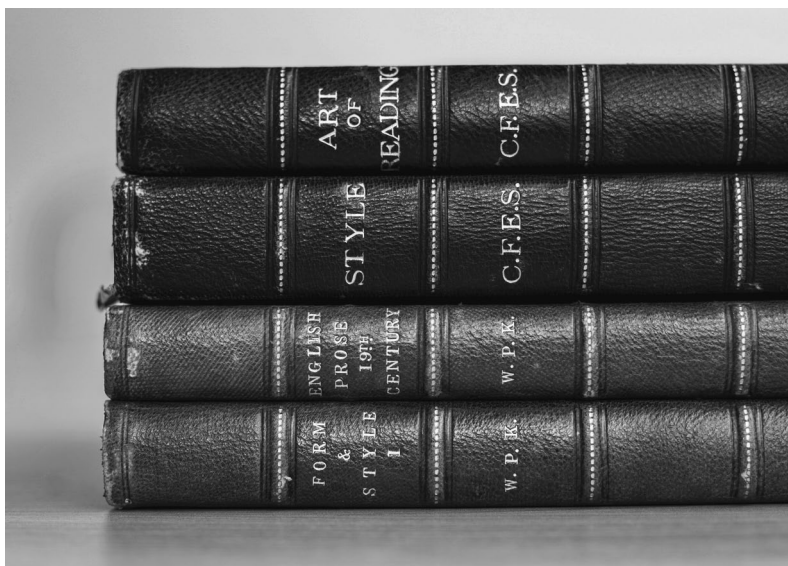


FIGURE 0.1. Caroline Spurgeon kept her student notes and her teaching notes in leather-bound volumes (1880s–1910s) with the names of the courses embossed in gilt on the spines. Here we see the notes she took in W. P. Ker’s Form and Style course and his English Prose of the 19th Century at the University 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 exten-

sion 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.