The Poetics and Pedagogy of Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich in the Era of Free College

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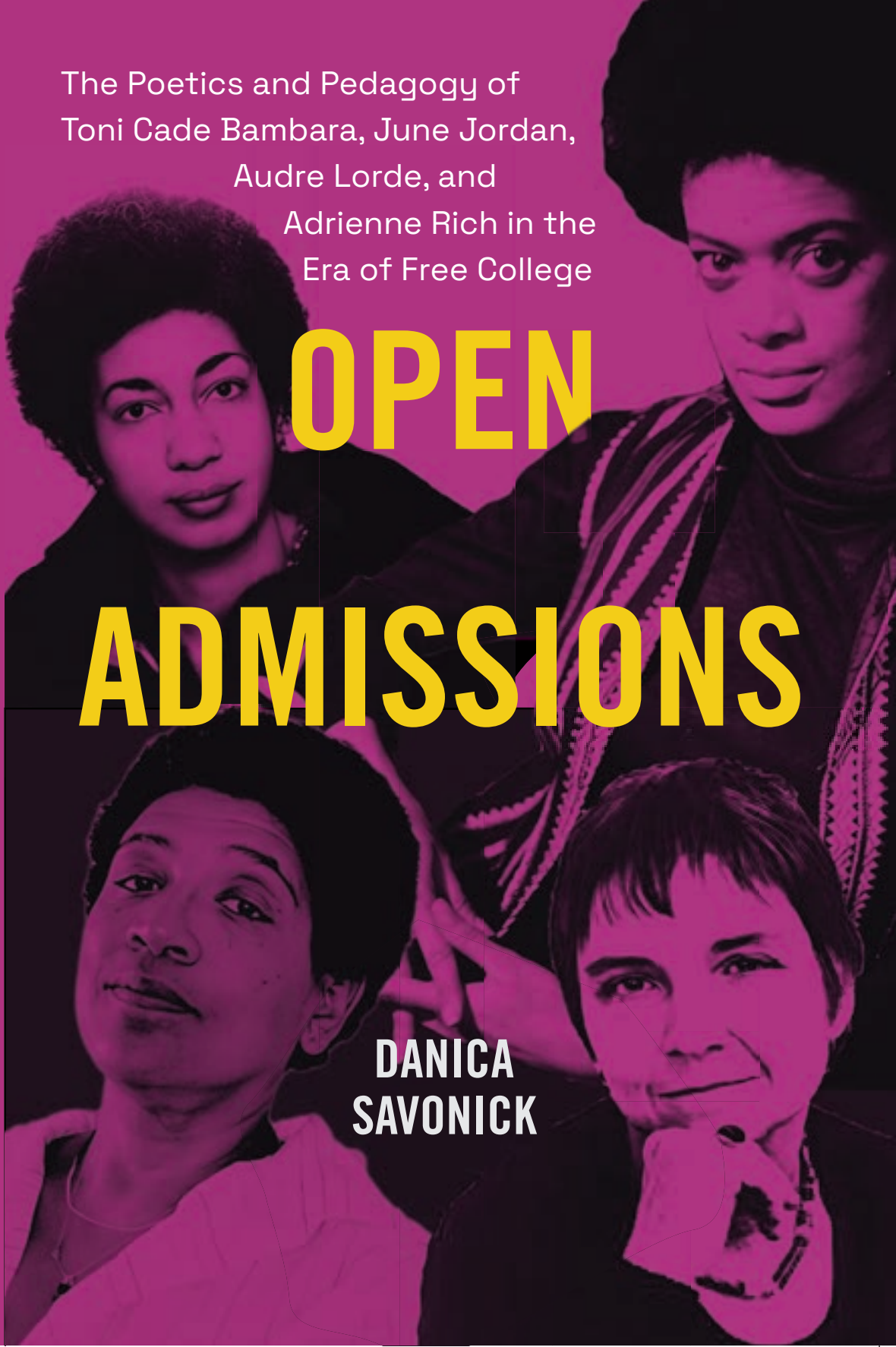

DANICA SAVONICK

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For my mom, **Julie Barad**,
my first and most beloved teacher

CONTENTS

PREFACE

As Free as Air and Water

This book is about what free college makes possible.

Like the writers and students you'll encounter in these pages, my life was changed by free higher education. As an undergraduate, I attended college gratis—something relatively uncommon among my generation. This was primarily due to the fact that my mom was an administrator at our state university, which had a tuition-remission program. Middle-class comfort and white privilege also significantly eased my path. Free from the question of "return on investment" that weighs so heavily on my generation, I took classes based on what I was interested in, who had a reputation for being a life-changing professor, and which courses were transforming my perspectives, and abandoned those (analytic philosophy!) that felt like irrelevant armchair exercises in erudition. In brilliantly themed literature courses like Experimental Lives, the novels we read served as sounding boards for many of us living away from home for the first time, figuring out how—and who—we wanted to be in the world. Classes on Marxism, feminist theory, and Black literature challenged what many of us had been taught about the United States as a nation of freedom and opportunity. Instead, they foregrounded systemic injustice, power disparities, and the uneven distribution of resources in society. Yet they also introduced us to the idea that things could be otherwise: that there are more desirable ways of organizing social life and that such worlds are worth fighting for. Realizing I still had much to learn, I parted ways with my career-bound peers and entered an English PhD program, despite being told there would be no jobs as a professor waiting

for me on the other end. When you don't have looming debt to pay off, such financially dubious but personally enriching choices feel more possible.

This book began in 2012. That year, student debt in the United States surpassed the one-trillion-dollar mark—a figure that now, ten years later, has nearly doubled. Wall Street executives rejoiced as their coffers expanded, while young people's futures slipped through their fingers. That fall, I joined the Free University of New York City, an offshoot of Occupy Wall Street that organized pop-up universities in parks throughout the city. We were a group of primarily twenty- and thirty-somethings, many of whom were pursuing graduate degrees. Though our stipends were meager, we had the attendant luxuries of flexible jobs, health care, and a bit of time with which to organize. What brought us together was a shared belief in education as a human right. We held as our maxim the words of Peter Cooper (founder of the working-class art and architecture school Cooper Union): that education should be "as free as air and water."[1] That fall, we organized outdoor universities where anyone could drop in and take—or teach—a class.

These free universities boiled learning down to its essence: just teachers, students, a schedule, and a hand-drawn map. Notably absent were expensive textbooks, fancy equipment, grades, and, of course, tuition. Some courses were taught by professors who moved their regularly scheduled classes to the park, others by local artists and activists. With no set curriculum, courses reflected topics that were important to us and that we imagined would be interesting and useful to others, too. Many of them—like The Carceral State; 1930s Labor Movements; Jews, the Bronx, and Whiteness; Agrarian Struggles in Latin America; and Hydrofracking and Why It Matters—addressed the material conditions in which our lives were unfolding. Others, like workshops on yoga and puppetry, Dating in NYC, and Fermenting Dissent: Sauerkraut and Quick Pickling, aimed to expand participants' capacities to experience joy and live more fully in the world. Not only did these pop-up universities give rise to new ideas about what might be a suitable subject for education, they also allowed us to experiment with less hierarchical teaching methods. In these outdoor classes, where you might be facilitating a conversation in one moment and taking notes the next, rigid binaries like "student" and "teacher" gave way to a more fluid sense of learning. Many were run using practices developed in Occupy, such as taking "stack" to ensure a fair distribution of speaking time, and according to principles that came to be known as "horizontal pedagogy."[2] That fall, in a crisp week in September, we demonstrated what learning could look like if liberated from the fetters of tuition.

The second major experience that forms the bedrock of this book was teaching English at Queens College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), during some of the most racially charged years in recent history. CUNY serves a large percentage of students who are working class, immigrants, people of color, and the first in their families to attend college, owing in part to comparatively low tuition costs. Students at CUNY pay around $3,000 per year for tuition (after financial aid), a not-insignificant expense for individuals who are often working their way through college but a far cry from figures of $50,000 and more that we see at other institutions. At the time I began teaching, the Black Lives Matter movement pulsed like a heartbeat through the city. While the movement focused on police brutality, it also raised questions about how schools help to maintain a racist society. At CUNY I was part of a community of educators who wanted to address this. Together, we interrogated every facet of our work—curriculum, assignments, classroom practices, evaluation methods—to determine which aspects upheld white supremacy and how these might be reimagined. As a new professor, I wanted to address injustice and empower my students, but I had more questions than answers about exactly how to do so. What had my education taught me that would be useful to them? How could I create classrooms they would look forward to attending? Was helping them to organize their ideas in writing a way of enforcing white, bourgeois, middle-class norms on working-class students of color, or a way of preparing them for the careers they desired? Though I didn't know it at the time, nearly fifty years earlier, four of the twentieth century's most important authors had found themselves in the same university system, asking remarkably similar questions.

This book was born beneath the leafy canopies of Madison Square Park, in the fluorescent classrooms of Klapper Hall, and on the city's streets, where our insistence that "Black Lives Matter" echoed off of Manhattan's skyscrapers, those glittering monuments to capitalist accumulation. It is the product of a moment in which we were living and breathing Peter Cooper's vision: that education should be "as free as air and water." And yet, as the mere mention of Flint, Michigan, makes all too clear, neither water nor air is free. Someone has to pay for professors, classrooms, desks, and textbooks. Thus, this book explores what happens when a society decides to invest in free college, not just for affluent students, but for everyone. As we will see, the benefits of such policies extend far beyond the individuals who choose to attend college. They lead to a more just, equitable, and beautiful world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Open Admissions reflects the collective wisdom of the many people whom I have had the great pleasure of thinking with.

This book's insistence that teaching can change lives was shaped by the educators who transformed mine. Thank you to Kandice Chuh, Cathy Davidson, and Richard Dienst, who showed me how learning can illuminate unseen paths and ways of being in the world.

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To my family—both biological and chosen, and especially Nikhil Gajwani—I love you.

Introduction

The Winds of Possibility

A writer by definition is a teacher.
—**AUDRE LORDE**, "POET AS TEACHER—
HUMAN AS POET—TEACHER AS HUMAN"

In the summer of 1968, author Toni Cade Bambara made a bold, unprecedented decision that likely would have scandalized her more conservative professorial colleagues, had they been privy to the situation. That summer, she was teaching a remedial writing course in a hot room in Harlem's Alamac Hotel, which had recently been repurposed as a dormitory. By now a seasoned educator, she knew that in such summer courses "attendance was spotty, weather singularly lousy, classrooms unbearable, and attention not always rapt."[1] To make matters worse, she and her students would be confined to a classroom as people took to the streets to protest the recent assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the seemingly endless war in Vietnam. Were they really expected to review the rules of sentence construction while antiwar activists and the Poor People's Campaign staged rallies and die-ins outside their classroom windows? That summer, in these less-than-inspiring conditions, in classrooms equipped with minimal resources, Bambara made a radical decision to turn the "content, direction, and goals of the course" over

to her students.[2] These so-called remedial students would now be in charge of deciding not only what but also how they would learn, and on what terms they would participate in the course.

Earlier that year, Bambara had taken a break from lesson planning to walk the newly hired poet and journalist June Jordan through the Gothic halls of the City College of New York and to her first classroom, calming the new instructor's nerves by assuring her, "Anything you have to give, just give it to them. . . . They'll be grateful for it."[3] Quietly, to herself, Jordan was still marveling at her good fortune to have found a writing program "experimental enough to allow instruction by a college dropout."[4] While Jordan was initially relieved that this new position would help pay rent and support her young son, the experience of teaching quickly began "to alter . . . the way [she] approached things as a writer."[5] The two authors were soon joined by Audre Lorde, whose brief stint as a visiting poet at Tougaloo College had left her hungry for more teaching opportunities. That same year, as critiques of educational racism swept through the city, poet Adrienne Rich made a "political decision to use [her] energies in work with 'disadvantaged' (Black and Puerto Rican) students."[6] She packed up her desk at prestigious, exclusive, and predominantly white Columbia University and traveled fifteen blocks north to teach, instead, at City College. Thus, while each arrived by their own path, by the tumultuous year of 1968, four of the twentieth century's most important authors were teaching down the hall from one another at Harlem's City College. Though they didn't know it at the time, these years would soon come to be known as some of the most controversial and revolutionary in educational history.

While Bambara, Jordan, Lorde, and Rich are best known for their literature, this book recovers the untold stories of their classrooms. Like many authors, these women spent their lives teaching at universities throughout the country. Yet relatively little has been said about this aspect of their work. Often, it is tacitly understood that writers undertake teaching positions merely for financial purposes, to pay the bills and support the more important work of writing. And in the case of some authors, this is certainly true. Vladimir Nabokov, for example, saw teaching as a "material necessity" that impinged on his "real life as an artist."[7] Nabokov took little interest in his Cornell University students, delivering the same lectures year after year. In a letter to fellow writer Edmund Wilson, he whined about this burden: "I am sick of teaching, I am sick of teaching, I am sick of teaching."[8] But the archives of these teacher-poets tell a different story. Though they, too, relied on their university paychecks, they saw teaching not as an ancillary obligation but as a meaningful form of creative, political, and intellectual work, deeply related to their writing.

Open Admissions focuses on these writers' overlapping experiences teaching at the City College of New York—the founding institution of the City University of New York (CUNY)—in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like the majority of educators today, these women were not teaching wealthy or even middle-class students at elite universities with ample resources. Rather, they were teaching working-class students and students of color at a massive, urban, public university. What brought them together was not merely fate but the college's new policies that expanded access to higher education. They were hired to teach in a landmark educational opportunity program known as SEEK, established in 1965 to bring Black and Puerto Rican students into the historically white City College. By 1970 this initiative led to an open admissions policy that guaranteed every graduate of the city's high schools a seat at one of its public colleges, free of tuition. I call this "the era of open admissions" (1965–76): a period that spans both the years leading up to CUNY's policy of free college for all (1965–69) and its official implementation (1970–76). At a time when journalists and faculty were accusing these democratizing initiatives of killing higher education, these writers understood free college as crucial to the flourishing of marginalized communities. And it was in these public college classrooms—not the ivy-clad towers of Harvard or Yale—that these four women became part of a teaching community that would forever alter their lives and the course of literary and educational history.

This book looks in two directions at once. It recovers the pedagogical legacy of these renowned writers and illustrates how that legacy shaped their literary works. As their archival syllabi, lesson plans, and assignments indicate, these authors were also transformative teachers who developed creative methods of teaching students to advocate for social change. And at the same time that they were developing social justice pedagogies and fighting for open admissions, they were simultaneously writing poems, short stories, young adult novels, and essays inspired by their experiences. We will see how these classrooms gave rise to new literary forms, what I call "the genres of open admissions," as well as many insights associated with intersectional feminism. *Open Admissions* thus reveals how teaching at CUNY transformed their writing and, with it, the course of American literature, learning, and feminist criticism.

* * *

Education has historically been a site of contested power struggle, where debates over what gets taught, who gets taught, how they are instructed, and

who will pay for learning index broader questions about the kind of society we wish to inhabit. In Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's terms, education is a form of social reproduction: the means by which a society passes its knowledge, skills, and values—as well as its social hierarchies—on to the next generation.[9] It is also a means by which the state enacts its political projects. Throughout US history, classrooms have been used to dispossess Native Americans, assimilate immigrants, and protect American hearts and minds against the incursions of communism. Yet activist educators have also turned these sites of reproduction into sites of interruption and instead bent the future's arc toward a more just, equitable, and pleasurable world.

Bambara's, Jordan's, Lorde's, and Rich's work builds on a long history of *transgressive teaching*, a term, borrowed from bell hooks, for learning that prepares students both to navigate the world and to change it.[10] Indeed, for as long as education has been used as an instrument of oppression, it has also been used to inspire, empower, liberate, and transform. In the United States, this tradition extends back at least to the nineteenth century. Throughout the Jim Crow era, as Black students were often subjected to what Carter Woodson called "mis-education," learning that serves the interests of white people, Black educators developed what Jarvis R. Givens calls "fugitive pedagogies" that taught students about the social, economic, and political conditions of oppression in order to resist and change them. Black K–12 teachers, Givens writes, "appropriated schooling to work in service of their freedom dreams," often while under surveillance, scrutiny, and the threat of violent repercussions.[11] Among these subversive educators were women like Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Lucy Laney, all of whom, according to Stephanie Y. Evans, developed innovative educational philosophies grounded in applied learning, recognition of cultural and social differences, critiques of American ideals, and a sense of communal responsibility.[12] Like the activist educators who preceded (and succeeded) them, Bambara, Jordan, Lorde, and Rich taught students to interrogate the status quo and imagine far beyond it.

Open Admissions revisits the 1960s and 1970s, a critical flash point in the history of transgressive teaching. Perhaps the best-known educator of this era is Paulo Freire, a figure whose work was read, utilized, and occasionally challenged by the women in this book. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first translated into English in 1970, Freire argued that traditional, hierarchical teaching methods—lecturing students, then testing their comprehension—constitute a "banking" model of education, which trains them to be passive, obedient members of society. Such methods, he contended, should be

replaced with more empowering "problem-posing" and "consciousness-raising" techniques.[13] While Freire's focus was on adult literacy programs in Brazil, this period also saw the emergence of liberatory pedagogies in the United States. There, activists in the era's social movements both criticized mainstream education as a tool of white supremacy, patriarchy, and imperialism and used learning to challenge these practices of domination. As scholars have demonstrated, much of this transgressive teaching took place outside of formal academic institutions: in sites like communist labor schools (Andy Hines), the Citizenship and Freedom Schools of the civil rights movement (Jon N. Hale), and the Pan-African and Black Liberation Schools of the Black Power movement (Russell Rickford, Donna Jean Murch).[14] But it also occurred within universities: in new departments of Black, ethnic, and women's studies and, as this book illustrates, in CUNY's basic writing classrooms.[15] In fact, the same year that Freire was writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, these authors and their coconspirators were developing a range of creative and consciousness-raising teaching methods—approaches that we can learn from and build on today.

A Quiet Revolution

Our story takes place at Harlem's City College, the first tuition-free public university in the United States. America's earliest universities were the province of the upper echelon: they trained the sons of wealthy white men to become the next generation of ministers, doctors, lawyers, and leaders of industry. City College, then the Free Academy, was established in 1847 "to provide children of immigrants and the poor access to free higher education based on academic merit" rather than inherited generational wealth.[16] According to its first president, Horace Webster, the new college was a democratic "experiment . . . [in] whether the children of the people, the children of the whole people, can be educated; and whether an institution of the highest grade can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few."[17] Since then, many have felt as if "the future of higher education in the United States was bound up with the fate of . . . City College."[18]

Though City College now serves many students of color (it's one of the most diverse institutions in the country), this wasn't always the case. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its professors proudly provided an Ivy League education—in terms of both curriculum and rigor—to those who couldn't afford one, earning the school a reputation as the "Harvard of the Proletariat." Yet throughout its early history, demand far outstripped the

limited number of students the college could admit, and administrators relied on increasingly strict admissions requirements, such as an 85 percent high school average (3.0 GPA), to determine who would gain access to these coveted seats. As the city's Black and Puerto Rican population increased, these steep requirements combined with entrenched conditions of educational racism within K–12 schools effectively excluded them from the university.[19] Thus, the majority of City College students were high-achieving young Jewish men who were barred by anti-Semitic quotas from schools like Harvard, Yale, and Columbia.[20]

In the 1960s, the hypocrisy of this college for the working class, located in Harlem, but full of white students, became even more apparent. Nationwide, college enrollments were skyrocketing—everywhere, that is, except at City College.[21] In fact, Harlem's public university was actually shrinking, admitting ever smaller and more selective fractions of the city's high school graduates.[22] And despite its reputation as a hotbed of political radicalism, faculty and administrators resisted opportunities to increase enrollments and desegregate the college. Instead, they clung to their exclusive admissions criteria in an effort to preserve their elite reputation. As a result, while CUNY was funded by collective taxpayer dollars, paid by all New York City residents, regardless of race or creed, between 94 and 97 percent of the students educated by those funds were white.[23] What was supposed to be the "Harvard of the Proletariat" looked more like a "white citadel" and "white colony" towering over its Harlem hill.[24]

In 1964 activists came together to challenge this racial exclusion. Amid protests over the city's failed integration efforts, members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) joined with Black and Puerto Rican students, parents, politicians, activists, educators, and progressive administrators to hold City College accountable to its historical mandate to educate "the children of the whole people."[25] Among their efforts was a Midnight March, organized by Shirley Chisholm and Percy Sutton, to demand that City College accept more students of color. According to New York City's former mayor David Dinkins, "That night the SEEK program was born."[26]

In 1965 City College established the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) program, the nation's first state-mandated educational opportunity program.[27] SEEK recruited "economically and educationally disadvantaged" students from the surrounding Harlem neighborhood who didn't meet the college's entrance requirements but showed academic promise. Supported by a federal antipoverty grant, the program waived their enrollment fees, provided book and travel stipends, and prepared them to matriculate

at City College through remedial coursework and specialized tutoring and counseling.[28] Though historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) had been educating Black students for over a century, SEEK was one of the first initiatives that prepared entire cohorts of working-class students—90 percent of whom were students of color—for entrance to a predominantly white institution.[29] While SEEK would eventually expand throughout the CUNY system and become a model for similar programs nationwide, when these authors were initially hired, its success was much less certain.[30]

Despite the historic grounds SEEK broke, many professors wanted little to do with it. Among faculty, sentiments ranged from skepticism about whether such students could handle the rigorous curriculum to outright hostility toward a new program that they believed might tarnish the college's reputation. English professors, in particular, did not want to teach the remedial and introductory writing courses these students would need to matriculate. These "tweedy, Anglophile," white men were "steeped in the traditional ideals of connoisseurship . . . concern[ed] with parsing and preserving the classics of English and American writing."[31] They viewed writing courses merely as skills training and preparation for "real" courses on literature—entrenched biases that are still familiar today. While the old guard was uninterested, a number of up-and-coming authors were lining up at the door to teach in this exciting new program. They included Bambara, Lorde, Jordan, and Rich as well as poets David Henderson and Raymond Patterson, African American literature scholars Barbara Christian and Addison Gayle, and Mina Shaughnessy, whose work at City College became foundational to the field of basic writing. Together, they formed a creative community committed to empowering their educationally disenfranchised students.

As Alexis Pauline Gumbs observes, SEEK instructors were hired, at least on paper, to perform the cultural work of assimilation. The government agreed to fund such initiatives in hopes that access to college would quell social unrest and pacify "unruly" minorities who were disrupting the city through strikes and protests. And this labor to "institutionally manage a post-civil rights diasporic population" fell squarely on the shoulders of writing instructors. Officially, these authors and their colleagues were supposed "to teach students to compose coherent essays . . . memos and reports" and, by extension, to be "composed, contained, and conformist."[32] However, as Gumbs acknowledges, this is not what transpired. Instead of issuing, in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's terms, "the call to order," they transformed their classrooms into sites of social change.[33] Beginning in their basic writing classes, and for many years to come, SEEK educators helped students deepen

their analyses of injustice, sharpen their tools for advocacy, and prepare for lifelong learning.

Though the stories of all SEEK instructors deserve to be told, *Open Admissions* focuses on four women whose experiences in the program shaped their development as major authors of American literature and feminist criticism. Unlike authors who teach advanced creative writing seminars to a select handful of affluent students, these women all taught introductory and remedial writing courses to students whose underfunded schools had failed to prepare them for college—a fact that was not incidental to their literature. Indeed, during the same period in which they were writing the short stories, poems, and essays that would eventually make them famous, they were also exchanging syllabi, adapting each other's assignments, reading radical education philosophies, and sitting in on each other's classes to take notes on how students responded to different teaching methods. Immersed in the creative community of the SEEK program, they became activist teacher-poets: writers who saw their work with words as connected to their work with students and who understood both as forms of political action.[34]

SEEK began as what Addison Gayle called a "quiet revolution" stealthily redistributing educational resources, but it did not remain quiet for long.[35] In the spring of 1969, inspired by both nationwide Black student movements and, as this book argues, the transgressive teaching they encountered in classrooms, SEEK students and their allies staged what political scientist Conrad Dyer refers to as "one of the largest and longest student occupations of an American University campus."[36] They halted regular classes and went on strike for two weeks, demanding a more racially just curriculum and more equitable admissions policies. The result was a historic victory: an open admissions policy that expanded SEEK's commitment to access and equity throughout the CUNY system.

Though CUNY was not the first university to adopt an open admissions policy—that honor, writes Carmen Kynard, belongs to HBCUs—its version was historic in several regards.[37] CUNY's policy constituted a dramatic departure from the college's highly selective admissions requirements. It defined "educational opportunity" in terms of not only access but also student outcomes and success. It was also implemented with unprecedented speed. And it captured the era's broader national sense that public institutions should be doing more to reduce poverty and increase opportunities for minorities.[38]

Today SEEK and open admissions are remembered for their dramatic socioeconomic benefits.[39] Through these initiatives, thousands of working-class students, students of color, and women gained access to college.[40]

Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman in Congress, saw SEEK as one of her greatest political contributions.[41] At the behest of a Democratic-majority Congress, Ronald Reagan declared December 11, 1986, to be National SEEK and College Discovery Day (even as he eviscerated the funding structures that would make such initiatives possible).[42] Today nearly every public university in the United States has some kind of opportunity program, many of which are modeled on SEEK. And though open admissions lasted only six years (1970–76), it led to the growth of a college-educated class in New York City's Black and Latinx communities, higher incomes within those communities, and greater levels of college attainment for many generations to come.[43]

But open admissions was more than an engine of social mobility. It was also what Lorde called "a wind of possibility" that swept across the CUNY campuses inspiring new ideas about learning, literature, and power and rustling many feathers with its squalls.[44] In these pages, we'll travel into Jordan's, Lorde's, Bambara's, and Rich's classrooms, where the era's debates surrounding educational access lit a fire in the imaginations of both professors and students. There, in their classrooms-turned-canvases, they questioned prevailing assumptions about learning: that teachers should determine what is taught, that students are the passive recipients of wisdom, that intellectual work should be painful, torturous, and disciplinary. If redesigned to serve the will of the people, what could learning look like? What might it become? And if an institution as historically exclusive as universities could be democratized, what other hierarchies might be toppled? As we will see, this spirit of creativity, experimentation, and imaginative possibility spilled out of the classroom and into the writing of these authors and their students.

The Archives of Activist Teaching

Open Admissions centers pedagogy: both theoretical and philosophical orientations toward teaching and learning, and actual classroom practices. Pedagogy is about how we discover and share ideas, skills, frameworks, methods, and ways of being and knowing. Although teaching has historically been one of the few professions available to women, pedagogy has been a strangely white, male-dominated field. With the exception of bell hooks, women and people of color are often sidelined in these discussions. Evans and Olivia N. Perlow and colleagues have observed that Black women, in particular, are often recognized as teachers and activists but not as educational philosophers, researchers, or pedagogical theorists.[45] One reason for this

critical neglect stems from how narrowly we tend to define what counts as pedagogical theory. Academic conversations on the subject often privilege peer-reviewed articles and academic books over actual everyday teaching materials. It's not unusual to see journals calling for papers for a special issue on pedagogy (teaching is almost always relegated to the occasional special issue) while explicitly stating that they do *not* want submissions of mere teaching materials, which are considered less valuable ephemera. This limited understanding privileges those with the time and resources to formalize their teaching philosophies in such labor-intensive formats. Within the tiered economy of higher education, the authors of such materials are more likely to be wealthy, white, tenured, male professors at elite institutions, who have the greatest access to research time, while women, people of color, and people who are working class perform the majority of our nation's teaching and service.[46] A narrow focus on books and peer-reviewed articles therefore reinforces a raced, classed, and gendered distinction between theory and practice, in which affluent white men are associated with the development of innovative teaching philosophies, which are then implemented by everyone else.

Drawing inspiration from Barbara Christian's notion that Black women have historically produced theoretical work in a range of forms, including those that are not recognized within academia, this book explores two different forms through which historically marginalized educators have produced pedagogical theory.[47] The first is archival teaching materials including syllabi, lesson plans, assignments, lecture notes, and student work. It is through such everyday materials, and the classroom practices they index, that many women, people of color, and working-class educators have engaged in transgressive teaching. Moreover, the creation of such materials, like a new assignment, involves extensive research into existing methods, multiple drafts, peer review with other instructors, and revision based on student feedback—intellectual labor rarely valued by the academy. Thus, we should understand teaching materials as sources of pedagogical knowledge: the means by which educators theorize through practice. Though these teacher-poets may not have published tomes like John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916) or Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1968] 1970), their archives reveal nuanced philosophies of education that they revised and refined through their actual classroom work with students—what we now call *praxis*.

Most of the archival materials analyzed in this project are located at the Spelman College Archives and the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe. This

project would not be possible without the work of the archivists at both institutions. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Kassandra Ware and Holly Smith, who so generously assisted me in writing this book. To be able to hold such materials—to admire Rich's lesson plans, neatly preserved in violet mimeograph ink; to find Jordan's assignments, smudged with the stains of snacks smuggled between classes; to realize that Bambara also revised her essay prompts until the wording was just right; to encounter Lorde's grocery list ("sardines . . . green peppers . . . sandals . . . dust pan") wedged between her syllabi, or her grumbling in the margins of a student's poem submitted in ink so faint "I can hardly read this!"—is an immense privilege that many of their readers would cherish. With that in mind, I've quoted such materials liberally in hopes of sharing their actual words about teaching with readers, maybe even inspiring some to try something new or different in their own classrooms. For readers who want to learn more about their teaching, Lost and Found: The CUNY Poetics Documents Initiative has published excerpts of each author's archival teaching materials, with important introductory essays by Miriam Atkin, Iemanjá Brown, erica kaufman, Makeba Lavan, Conor Tomás Reed, and Talia Shalev. They can be purchased in chapbook form or viewed freely online, honoring these teacher-poets' commitments to learning from each other's teaching.[48]

The other materials I consider as sites of pedagogical knowledge are literary texts. Historically, literature has been a means by which marginalized people have shared knowledge beyond the walls of formal institutions that excluded them. While some educational insights emerge in the places we might expect, such as essays like Jordan's "Writing and Teaching" and Rich's "Teaching Language in Open Admissions," others are embedded in their poems, novels, short stories, and films that are not ostensibly about education. We will see how such texts theorize relations of power, knowledge, and learning, even through their treatments of other subjects: a backyard, a playground, a bombing, a healing. Feminist literature, with its attention to quotidian politics, the embodied nature of experience, resistance at multiple scales, modes of relationality, and the historicity of the present, constitutes an underexplored archive for pedagogical thought.

This story is constructed from archives that conceal as much as they reveal. These absences and omissions remind us how ephemeral teaching and learning are—how much occurs in the intimate spark of the encounter, the fleeting moment that will linger on only in the memories of the professors and students who were present, and might be remembered differently by each. Confronted with such silences, I try not to re-create these classrooms

but to tell the stories in ways that are useful for our present. In some instances, I engage in small acts of what Saidiya Hartman calls "critical fabulation," "imagin[ing] what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done," while in other moments, I refuse "to fill in the gaps and to provide closure."[49] I don't pretend to construct the singular truth of a given class or assignment but to speculate in ways that are faithful to the lives and work of these monumental women and might illuminate possibilities for us today. Such an approach might be thought of, in Rich's terms, as an "educated guess," a key methodology for feminist historiography and the study of those whose lives are least documented.[50] Like all stories, those you will read here are filtered through the writer's perspectives and experiences—in my case, as a white, middle-class, Jewish, cisgender woman, a CUNY and SUNY professor. I hope this book will inspire others to engage with their archives and find other stories.

As their archival materials and published writing indicate, these authors taught students to make decisions about the structure of their courses; to conduct local research on poverty, housing, food, and education; to write and publish literature; and to become teachers in their classrooms and leaders in their communities. Two patterns are especially prominent across their work. First, as illustrated by the opening example of Bambara's cocreated course, they developed teaching methods that redistributed classroom power to students. Second, instead of merely transmitting preestablished wisdom, they facilitated student knowledge production. More precisely, they helped students generate the ideas and perspectives missing from mainstream media, journalism, and curricula, what I'm calling *insurgent knowledge*.[51] Often, this involved the publication of student writing. Though not all of these women engaged in these practices evenly, traces of them are evident throughout the archives of all four.

I am hardly the first person to write about these authors as teachers. Linda Janet Holmes and Abena Busia have analyzed Bambara's creative, activist teaching, and Valerie Kinloch and Kirsten Bartholomew Ortega have examined Jordan's community-engaged instruction methods. As Gumbs has demonstrated, Jordan and Lorde developed "counter-poetic" pedagogies that used classrooms to protest "the colonial project . . . with varying levels of success."[52] And Tomás Reed has illustrated how, in their CUNY classrooms, Bambara, Jordan, and Lorde contributed to the early development of Black women's studies.[53] Building on the work of these scholars, I explore the distinct pedagogies of each writer as well as the ways their teaching emerged through conversations among SEEK instructors and with

educators across the country. Though we often think of teaching in individualized terms—one cites Freire's notion of "the banking model of education" or hooks's concept of "engaged pedagogy"—their archives highlight the collective networks of pedagogical exchange that go into producing the scene of teaching and learning. Indeed, nestled among each author's own archives are similar materials from other educators that they collected, adapted, and remixed. Through these documents, this book traces what I call *collaboration in the archives*: the ways teaching materials travel from one pair of hands to another, forming often-unacknowledged collaborations that transcend the walls of individual classrooms and institutions.

Many of the practices in this book—daily journals, student-led discussions, collaborative public projects—will be familiar to contemporary educators. They exemplify what's known as *student-centered* teaching: methods that involve students in decisions about their learning, emphasize inquiry and discovery, and connect course content to their ideas and experiences. The term emerged in the 1920s to name a paradigm shift away from memorization, discipline, and lecturing to instead prioritizing the interests and needs of individual learners. Though student-centered learning is often traced back to the Progressive Era, and the work of John Dewey, it also has long-standing roots in Black educational history.[54] In fact, Fanny Jackson Coppin's calls for active learning and Anna Julia Cooper's philosophies of relevant, applied, and practical education both predated Dewey's more famous philosophies (in Coppin's case, by a quarter of a century).[55]

Though student-centered teaching transformed many midcentury K–12 classrooms, especially in well-funded districts that could afford the personalized attention it required, its implementation in higher education was slower and more sporadic. According to Jonathan Zimmerman, the twentieth century's increasing college enrollments combined with lack of incentives for good university teaching meant that lectures and exams remained more common, despite research showing active and participatory methods to be more effective.[56] Exceptions could be found, however, in certain pockets of academia. Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan have shown that English professors in varied institutional settings, from junior colleges to extension schools, developed pedagogical practices that centered student inquiry and collaborative knowledge production.[57] Student-centered methods could also be found among practitioners of critical pedagogy, such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Ira Shor, who adapted Freire's work to the context of American classrooms.[58] They were also present among professors involved with the era's social movements, some of whom taught in the new

fields of Black, ethnic, and women's studies, while others, like the women in this book, taught basic writing. These educators recognized that they could not challenge practices of domination—racism, sexism, imperialism—through pedagogical paradigms predicated on the tyranny of instructors over students. Rather, challenging social hierarchies required remaking the classroom, too.

Bambara, Jordan, Rich, and Lorde were theorists and practitioners of both student-centered and feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy is an approach to learning that addresses the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities along axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability and attempts to democratize power in the classroom and in society. While I use the more general term *feminist pedagogy*, my definition is grounded in theories of "Black feminist" and "engaged" pedagogy developed by scholars including Barbara Omolade, Gloria Joseph, and bell hooks.[59] Black feminist pedagogy centers the histories, intellectual traditions, and experiences of Black women (Omolade) and "Third World" people (Joseph). It honors the experiential knowledge that students bring to the classroom and expands their intellectual, analytical, and imaginative horizons, especially their understanding of structural inequality.[60] Similarly, engaged pedagogy involves students in cocreating classrooms and sharing knowledge, facilitates personal and social transformation, emphasizes students' well-being, and links contemplation to action.

As practitioners of feminist pedagogy, these teacher-poets saw classrooms as sites in the broader struggle to bring about a better world: one in which everyone has access to health care, housing, food, education, decision-making power, and the time and resources to pursue what brings them joy. Among their many contributions to the field, perhaps the most exciting are their shared emphases on imagination and creativity, and their experiments with alternative worldmaking in the classroom. I hope that their teaching might help us engage contemporary questions of justice and equity in more meaningful, material ways, rather than merely paying lip service to diversity.

Though I went to their archives looking for teaching materials, what I found was evidence of educational activism that extended far beyond the classroom. As it turns out, not everyone agreed with this era's new vision of college for all. Like many efforts to expand education to working-class students and students of color, open admissions was met with vehement opposition. The *New York Times* ran articles with headlines like "50% of Freshmen to Come from Slums without Need to Qualify on Grades."[61] Journalists patholo-

gized these "new students" as "deprived . . . drug addicts, unwed mothers, and fatherless, ghetto residents."[62] And much of this rhetoric was echoed by the CUNY professoriate. In books like Louis G. Heller's *The Death of the American University: With Special Reference to the Collapse of the City College of New York* (1973) and Geoffrey Wagner's *End of Education* (1976), faculty argued that open admissions decreased academic standards and diluted the quality of a City College degree. Such policies, wrote Theodore L. Gross, chair of the City College English Department (and later dean of humanities), were "how to kill a college."[63]

Unlike these elitist critics, Bambara, Jordan, Lorde, and Rich saw CUNY's democratic initiatives as a tremendous opportunity to reinvent higher education, making it more useful and relevant to marginalized communities. They wrote position papers in support of students' demands, advocated for free college at Board of Higher Education meetings, garnered support among faculty, and joined their students' protests. Reflecting on this moment, Jordan recalls that they were working "double overtime fighting for Open Admissions," inspired by the dream that they "could change public education in this country."[64] And what began at CUNY would inform, for each, a lifetime of educational activism.

The Classroom Contexts of Feminist Literature and Criticism

In addition to recovering these authors' pedagogies, *Open Admissions* explores the surprising and complex ways that their art, literature, and criticism were impacted by their classrooms. In recent years, scholars have begun to challenge the assumption that teaching is merely a way for artists, authors, and critics to support their creative and intellectual work. Lesley Wheeler and Chris Gavaler, for instance, have shown how Marianne Moore's experiences teaching at the Carlisle Indian School inspired her writing about the flexible nature of identity. Similarly, Andy Hines has demonstrated how the work of midcentury Black artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Oliver Killens was influenced by their teaching in progressive people's schools.[65] Other scholars, like Buurma and Heffernan and Matt Brim, have illustrated how literary criticism and queer theory have emerged from—and often reflected the politics and practices of—critics' classrooms.[66] Building on this research, this book illustrates how some of these authors' most important works were born in their CUNY classrooms. While Lorde has since become famous for speeches like "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," we will observe how that text drew on ideas about difference and creativity she first

developed in courses like Race and the Urban Situation, and how Bambara's groundbreaking anthology *The Black Woman* was written, in part, by her City College students. In fact, we would not know nearly as much today about the overlapping experiences of race, class, gender, and sexuality, were it not for these CUNY classrooms.

This book also contributes to our knowledge of how education initiatives and policies impacted the literature of the 1960s and 1970s. Mark McGurl has recently labeled this period "the program era" to highlight the influence that creative writing MFA programs had on this work. The rise of such programs, McGurl writes, generated a "constellation of aesthetic problems" around the tensions between modernist aesthetic principles and the protocols of institutional life that many midcentury authors took up in their writing.[67] However, at the same time that these exclusive (and notoriously racist) programs were influencing writers like Thomas Pynchon, John Cheever, and Kurt Vonnegut, CUNY's democratic education initiatives were simultaneously giving rise to major works of feminist literature and criticism. If we focus not on the era's MFA programs but instead on CUNY's access-oriented classrooms, literary history looks a bit different. Unlike the "self-involved" and "self-referential" fiction that reflected the MFA program's obsession with "individuals and their individuality," Jordan's, Lorde's, Bambara's, and Rich's writing was shaped by the open admissions ethos: the idea that transformative learning should be available to anyone who wants it.[68] In addition, while the campus novel is the paradigmatic genre of the program era, open admissions inspired its own literary forms, what I call *the genres of open admissions*: the classroom lyric, the campus essay, and the anthology of student writing. Each of these offers unique insights into the era's debates over relevant learning, educational access, and the value of experiential knowledge.

As much as these authors were inspired by their classrooms, they were also impacted by each other. Bringing together these three venerated poets (Lorde, Rich, Jordan), three women associated with the Black Arts Movement (Bambara, Jordan, Lorde), and two foundational figures of lesbian feminism and queer theory (Lorde, Rich), in the context of their classrooms, illuminates new perspectives on their work. We will witness how Bambara's friendship with Jordan influenced her fiction, how Lorde and Rich introduced Jordan to women's poetry, how Lorde understood her work in dialogue with Bambara's, and the ways her Black women colleagues shaped Rich's writings about race. Indeed, these friendships first forged amid open

admissions—in support of their students and the fight for free college—left an indelible mark on feminist literature and criticism.

* * *

The following chapters trace the reciprocal relations between teaching and writing in the work of each author, while also placing them in conversation and in context, as part of a broader movement that understood teaching methods, the humanities, and public education as crucial to social change. In addition, by following these figures beyond the open admissions era—as they went on to teach in other sites as distinct as Rutgers, Stanford, the Neighborhood Arts Center in Atlanta, and the Free University of Berlin—each chapter illustrates how their experiences at CUNY continued to impact their writing and teaching for many decades to come.

Chapter 1 explores how SEEK's earliest educators—Bambara, Christian, and Gayle—laid the groundwork for much of the transgressive and student-centered teaching that followed. Bambara, in particular, developed a community-controlled and multimodal pedagogy that involved students in making collective decisions about their learning, including what forms that learning would take. This chapter also recovers the classroom context of Bambara's anthology *The Black Woman* (1970) to highlight the key role that writing classrooms have played in the history of feminist criticism. Chapter 2 analyzes how—in her City College classrooms and weekend writing workshops—Jordan began developing a public and project-based pedagogy that encouraged students to use what they learned in the service of social change. It focuses on Jordan and Bambara's shared practice of publishing student writing and the products of that pedagogy, including nearly a dozen anthologies that they edited throughout their careers. Considered alongside their teaching archives, these anthologies demonstrate how classrooms have been central for not only the reception and dissemination of American literature but also its production.

The final two chapters focus on Rich and Lorde, both of whom arrived at City College in the fall of 1968. Chapter 3 shows how Rich's early experiences in SEEK inspired her pedagogy of location: ways of teaching students to use their lived experiences as points of entry into broader material conditions and questions of power. It also illustrates how her development as a radical feminist was influenced by her time at City College. Chapter 4 explores how Lorde's theories of difference emerged from, and were also shaped by, her

CUNY classrooms. It examines both her pedagogies of difference—how she helped students cultivate an activist consciousness—and the ways that teaching inspired some of her most influential writing.

Open Admissions thus illustrates how New York City's radical experiment in free college for all transformed twentieth-century poetics and pedagogy. But for contemporary readers, this era may feel like a distant dream. At present, the future of higher education seems more uncertain than ever. Since the 1970s, the right's defunding of public universities has resulted in widespread austerity and levels of student debt approaching the two-trillion-dollar mark. More recently, this assault has also included attacks on the study of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Yet research in fields such as Black and ethnic studies and abolitionist university studies has tended to focus more on the ways universities are complicit in (re)producing a racist, sexist, capitalist, and imperialist society.[69] These insights are invaluable, but they leave us with few reasons to organize against the dismantling of public higher education. The pages that follow reorient these conversations around four women who not only critiqued the neoliberalization of higher education but fought tirelessly to expand access to transformative learning, and whose lives were forever changed in the process. Together, they remind us of the multifaceted ways that educators can work toward a better world within our classrooms—and why such spaces are worth fighting for. It is my hope that this history will help us contest the privatization of knowledge and power that has come to dominate educational policy and practice.

NOTES

Preface

1. While this quotation is generally attributed to Cooper, Samuel Holleran suggests that it was actually Cooper's son-in-law, Abram Hewitt, who coined the mellifluous phrase. Holleran, "Free as Air and Water."

2. Backer et al., "Horizontal Pedagogy."

Introduction

1. Toni Cade Bambara, in "Report on the Summer Seminar, Pre-baccalaureate Program, City College," 1968, folder 385, Adrienne Rich Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

2. Bambara, in "Summer Seminar."

3. J. Jordan, "Black Studies," 45.

4. J. Jordan, introduction to "Tomorrow in English," 1967, box 76, folder 13, June Jordan Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

5. J. Jordan, "Notes toward a Black Balancing," 84.

6. Rich, "Teaching Language," 53.

7. McGurl, *Program Era*, 2.

8. Nabokov, quoted in McGurl, *Program Era*, 1.

9. Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education*, 10–11.

10. hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

11. Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy*, 13.

12. Evans, *Black Women*.

13. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72, 80, 83.

14. As Hines writes, in the 1940s and 1950s, Black leftist artists and intellectuals excluded from, or censored by, historically white universities utilized communist labor schools to pursue the study of Black culture and questions of

politics, economics, and justice. Hale shows how the Mississippi Freedom Schools taught Black students to advocate for change. Rickford illustrates how the Black Power movement led to the establishment of dozens of Pan-African Nationalist schools, where anti-imperial, anticapitalist, and radically internationalist teaching cultivated critical consciousness and self-determination. Hines, *Outside Literary Studies*; Hale, *Freedom Schools*; and Rickford, *African People*. See also Murch, *Living for the City*, 182; and Kelley, "Black Study, Black Struggle."

15. See hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*; Neville and Cha-Jua, "Kufundisha"; Boxer, *When Women Ask*; Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections*, 133; and McWorter and Bailey, "Black Studies Curriculum Development."

16. City College of New York, "Our History."

17. Webster, quoted in Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege*, 2.

18. Kriegel, "Surviving the Apocalypse," 54.

19. While City College's admissions criteria claimed to be meritocratic, a 1964–65 study by political scientist Allen B. Ballard found its standards made admission almost impossible for minority students. Traub, *City on a Hill*, 45.

20. Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege*, 3.

21. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, colloquially known as the GI Bill, and Lyndon Johnson's National Higher Education Act (1965) increased federal funding for college. This era saw the emergence of what Christopher Newfield calls "a midcentury consensus" around the notion that higher education was a public good that benefited all of society and the economy, not just those individuals who attended college: "Society was therefore justified in bearing the cost of public colleges itself." Newfield, *Great Mistake*, 37–38. Though the GI Bill provided a free university education to thousands of World War II veterans, the legislation was strategically crafted so that these provisions would bypass low-income communities of color and primarily benefit white people.

22. In 1952 City College admitted 17 percent of New York City high school graduates; by 1960 that number was down to 13 percent. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 45–46.

23. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 40.

24. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 42, 63.

25. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 392.

26. Dinkins, quoted in Hershenson, "Second Chances."

27. Bernard Levy, Leslie Berger, and Allen B. Ballard established the SEEK program.

28. Ballard and Berger designed a program that was technically race neutral but would, in effect, admit and support more Black and Puerto Rican students. To qualify for SEEK, "students had to have a high school diploma, live in a deprived area in New York City, be under age 30, and not have attended college before." Reeves, "Mina Shaughnessy," 118. They received a weekly stipend of $50.

29. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 114.

30. Arthur O. Eve used SEEK as the model for the Educational Opportunity Program at the State University of New York (SUNY), which was later extended to private universities like Cornell, where it was known as Higher Education Opportunity Program.

31. Traub, *City on a Hill*, 112.

32. Gumbs, "Nobody Mean More," 241, 243.

33. Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*, 9.

34. Rich described being hired as a "poet-teacher." Rich, "Teaching Language," 55. Though Bambara primarily wrote fiction and prose, I use *poet* to denote their shared creative use of language.

35. Gayle, "Quiet Revolution."

36. Dyer, "Protest and the Politics," 1.

37. As W. E. B. Du Bois argues, Black activists have historically led struggles for universal public education. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 638. During Reconstruction, the Freedmen's efforts made schools available to both Black and white Southerners. At HBCUs, the mission of Black education necessitated a focus on access rather than exclusivity. Kynard writes, "HBCUs had long ago established open admissions programs, provided for the education of African Americans, and heralded in an educated, professional class who would challenge . . . segregation and racial oppression." Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections*, 177.

38. Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege*, 19–20.

39. Lavin and Hyllegard, *Changing the Odds*; Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege*; and Attewell and Lavin, *Passing the Torch*.

40. In their first twenty years, SEEK and College Discovery (its sister program in the community colleges) provided 100,000 students access to college. Reagan, "National SEEK and College Discovery Day."

41. Winslow, "Shirley Chisholm."

42. Reagan, "National SEEK and College Discovery Day."

43. Though open admissions benefited all major ethnic groups in the city, including many students of color, white students disproportionately reaped the benefits, and thus it actually preserved racial inequality. Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein call this "the paradox of open admissions": "While benefits do flow to those targeted to receive them, they also flow unintentionally to others, and often the latter, possessing more resources than the former, are better able to take advantage of the new opportunities." Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege*, 284.

44. Lorde, "Excerpt from Deotha," 49.

45. Evans, *Black Women*; and Perlow et al., *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies*, 2.

46. The identity of full-time faculty varies by academic rank such that white people, especially white men, are disproportionately represented among higher-ranked, research-focused positions that involve less teaching. For instance,

79 percent of full professors are white, and 51 percent are white men. National Center for Education Statistics, "Race/Ethnicity of College Faculty." White women and people of color are overrepresented among adjuncts. American Federation of Teachers, "Army of Temps."

47. Christian, "Race for Theory," 52.

48. Bambara, *Realizing the Dream*; Lorde, *"I Teach Myself"*; and J. Jordan, *"Life Studies."*

49. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11, 8.

50. Rich, "Resisting Amnesia," 148.

51. These classrooms supported what Michel Foucault calls the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges": historical and popular knowledges "that have been buried and disguised," not recognized by authority, marginalized, and "disqualified as inadequate . . . or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity." Foucault, "Two Lectures," 81, 82.

52. Gumbs, "Nobody Mean More," 242.

53. Tomás Reed, "Early Developments." See also Tomás Reed, *New York Liberation School*.

54. In *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey argued that learning should emerge from students' observations and experiences. He advocated for problem-solving, hands-on activities, projects, and critical thinking.

55. Evans, *Black Women*. See also Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy*, 182. Some aspects of student-centered pedagogy extend back even further. Perlow et al. have found that teaching methods grounded in "collective responsibility" were present in precolonial Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Perlow et al., *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies*, 5–6.

56. Zimmerman, *Amateur Hour*. Research has found that learner-centered methods are more effective than lectures in helping students process and retain new information. These methods promote deep and meaningful learning rather than surface learning (learning that doesn't fade when the semester ends); they improve students' abilities to apply what they're learning to other contexts and situations; and they increase students' motivation. Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*.

57. Buurma and Heffernan, *Teaching Archive*.

58. Critical pedagogy treats schools within the social and political fabric of a class-driven society, rejects the neutrality of knowledge, analyzes teaching as an inherently political act, and challenges practices of education as domination.

59. Omolade, "Black Feminist Pedagogy"; Joseph, "Black Feminist Pedagogy"; and hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

60. See also Henry, "Black Feminist Pedagogy."

61. Schumach, "50% of Freshmen."

62. "Report from Ann Cook to Dean Robert Young and the SEEK Faculty Re: Evaluation and Recommendations," 1968, City College, folder 385, Rich Papers.

63. Gross, "How to Kill a College."

64. J. Jordan, reflections at memorial service for Audre Lorde, February 18, 1993, box 58, folder 2, Jordan Papers.

65. Wheeler and Gavaler, "Imposters and Chameleons"; and Hines, *Outside Literary Studies*, 132–33, 151–52.

66. Buurma and Heffernan, *Teaching Archive*; and Brim, *Poor Queer Studies*.

67. McGurl, *Program Era*, ix.

68. McGurl, *Program Era*, xi, 34, 4.

69. See Ferguson, *Reorder of Things*; Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*; Chatterjee and Maira, *Imperial University*; Kelley, "Black Study, Black Struggle"; and Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies."

Chapter One. Toni Cade Bambara's Community-Controlled and Multimodal Pedagogy

1. Toni Cade Bambara, "Working at It in Five Parts," 2 drafts, 1980?, box 4, Toni Cade Bambara Papers, Spelman College Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

2. Bambara, interviewed in Chandler, "Voices beyond the Veil," 350.

3. Bambara, quoted in Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 10.

4. Bambara, quoted in Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 10.

5. Bambara, quoted in Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 10.

6. Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 11.

7. Toni Cade Bambara, "What Is It I Think I'm Doing Anyway?," draft and proof, 1979?, box 4, folders 80–82, Bambara Papers, Spelman College Archives.

8. Bambara, quoted in Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 1.

9. Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 35.

10. Bambara, quoted in Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 39.

11. Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 36.

12. Holmes, *Joyous Revolt*, 40.

13. The pilot year of SEEK (1965–66) was funded by a $125,000 federal anti-poverty grant, $60,900 of which went toward the salaries of its seven lecturers. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 64–65, 186. These figures assume that funds were distributed equally. All 2023 dollars were calculated using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator.

14. Bambara, "Realizing the Dream."

15. Molloy, "Convenient Myopia," 18.

16. Bambara, "Children Who Got Cheated," 65.

17. Toni Cade Bambara, in "Report on the Summer Seminar, Pre-baccalaureate Program, City College," 1968, folder 385, Adrienne Rich Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.