Reviews

Seeking News, Making China: Information, Technology, and the Emergence of Mass Society, by John Alekna. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2024. 359 pages. $140.00 cloth. $35.00, paper. $35.00, electronic.

Situating at the intersection of modern Chinese history and media studies and engaging the existing scholarship, *Seeking News, Making China* investigates the role of radio broadcast in transforming China into a mass society during 1919-1968. With the premise that humans desire "news," defined as "time-sensitive information" (p. 13), Alekna adopts an analytical framework—"newsscape," that is, "a holistic heuristic that encompasses interlocking technological practices and social patterns, natural geography and built infrastructure, that can comprehend all aspects of the way information moves thorough a social and physical landscape" (p. 9).

Chapter 1 shows how the news of May Fourth demonstration of 1919 took nearly two weeks to reach Sichuan province and make sense to the public there. The speed of the news travelling across the country depended on the infrastructure of telegraph and postal services, including the telegraph coding practice (and skills of individual operators) and conditions of rail lines, roads, canals, rivers, as well as "weather and tide, the rhythms of festivals and market days, the shape of temple walls and theaters, and the human impulse to investigate noise and commotion" (p. 28)—what constituted the newsscape.

Chapter 2 tells the debut of radio in China on January 23, 1923, thanks to a New Zealand-born man, E. G. H. Osborn. Although the radio station established by Osborn was short-lived, it ushered China into a new era of radio broadcasting. The warlord regime in Beijing at the time tried to ban radio stations and receivers, yet it was the warlord in Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin and his son Zhang Xueliang, who pioneered the advancement of radio broadcast technology and usage in 1922-1931, as Chapter 3 reveals.

Chapter 4 discusses the development of radio broadcast in 1927-1937 when people gathering and listening to broadcasting in public spaces, such as stores, teahouses, and theaters, became common. The Nationalist government also began to place listening stations in rural counties with radio monitors who transcribed and printed the contents of broadcasts twice a day and posted them on public walls

and blackboards. Thus, a more textured newsscape was created, potentially for forming and mobilizing a mass society. These practices did not cease with the Japanese occupation of parts of China during 1937-1945, as Chapter 5 shows that the Second Sino-Japanese War was also fought in the airwaves between the Nationalist government and the Japanese-collaboration authorities. Japan was able to produce more radio receivers and build more broadcast stations, so that Japanese-controlled regimes dominated the airwaves. The infrastructure they built would later be inherited by the Nationalist and the Communist governments.

Chapter 6 describes the development of radio broadcast under the Communists during 1937-1949. They made use of the infrastructure built by the Nationalist government or the Japanese where available and set up the Yan'an radio station in 1944. One rare and enduring feature of the Communist radio broadcasting was the exclusive use of women as announcers. Alekna offers conjectures as to why the Chinese prefer female voices on radio: It may have to do with the tonal nature of Chinese language and a female inclination toward accent standardization.

Chapter 7 covers 1949-1958 and analyzes how the newsscape including a wired broadcast system with loudspeakers in rural China contributed to the disaster of starvation in the Great Leap Forward. When local broadcasting posts increased, listeners became participants and contributors. This facilitated the unfolding of starvation, as peasants, who were daily exposed to stories of "successes" of the Leap from nearby communities, became "more willing to overlook evidence of failure in front of their own eyes" (p. 237). Furthermore, Chapter 8 on the Cultural Revolution up to 1968 shows why the locally controlled wired broadcast systems were positioned to "mediate a social collapse" (p. 252) and how factions of self-styled revolutionaries tried to take over local broadcast stations by violence.

After discussing these historical episodes, among other things, Alekna concludes that China's wired broadcast networks did not just brainwash a passive population, and today's Chinese firewalled intranet is not a loss for the average Chinese person either. "As the history of the newsscape shows us, people must *want* communications technology for it to have enduring significance. And they do. In fact, one of the organizing principles of the technopolitical process is that people will always seek more information" (p. 259). In summary, this book is an insightful contribution to the scholarship and a useful reference for anyone who teaches modern Chinese history or media studies.

Christopher Newport University Xiaoqun Xu

Poisoned Relations: Healing, Power, and Contested Knowledge in the Atlantic World, by Chelsea Berry. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024. 272 pages. $49.95, cloth. $49.95, electronic.

Historians of the Atlantic world have long understood that accusations of poisoning levied by slave owners against enslaved people highlighted the anxiety inherent to the forced intimacies of bonded labor. In her first monograph,

Poisoned Relations: Healing, Power, and Contested Knowledge in the Atlantic World, Chelsea Berry argues that poisoning accusations were far more than just a result of anxious slave owners and vengeful enslaved people, but, rather, that poisoning spoke to far more complex understandings of health and wellbeing that clashed, conflicted, and conjoined in the crucible of slave society. Enslaved people accused healers within their own communities of poisoning, they could think of the act as a healing measure, and they used accusations as a method of political critique. These actions resist the narrow framework of resistance that scholars have often assumed to be characteristic of all acts of poisoning. Berry argues that "poison was a slippery and unstable concept" (p. 66). Atlantic Africans trafficked into slavery from West and West Central Africa believed that poisoning was an act of corruption that the powerful visited upon the weak, whereas Europeans conceived of poison as a substance used by the weak to harm the powerful. Across European and Atlantic African societies, poison was always a matter of power. Berry argues that "whoever has had the power to diagnose illness has had the power to define cultural conceptions of evil and harm in the wider public" (p. 7). Thus, poison was a matter of "political morality," social stability, public health, and interpersonal trust (p. 3). Berry's brilliant work moves poison from a peripheral aspect of Atlantic slave societies to a central way of understanding how "constructed narratives from multiple communities converged and slipped past each other" (p. 7).

Poisoned Relations is an ambitious work of scholarship that is truly Atlantic in its scope. Though Berry's focus is the late seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, she actually begins by fleshing out poison's historical roots as far back as 1000 CE. Rather than confining her inquiry to a geographically bounded empire or a linguistically defined region, Berry employs a cross section of locales across empires, languages, and modes of economic production; namely, Virginia, Martinique, the Dutch Guianas, and Bahia. Rather than organizing the text by region or period, Berry chooses to thematically interweave places and times; seamlessly moving from mid-eighteenth-century Suriname to late-seventeenth-century Bahia to nineteenth-century Virginia in order to discuss belly-swelling as a widely reported poisoning symptom, and from New York to Martinique to Jamaica to Suriname when tracing the trope that enslaved people hid poison substances beneath their fingernails. She chooses these locations specifically because of their differences, rather than their similarities, to highlight "the shared patterns" in poisoning cultures that existed across imperial divisions (p. 3). Such a tactic illuminates the flexibility and fluidity of knowledge exchange and of transnational intellectual history.

One of the most effective aspects of Berry's research is her use of "comparative historical linguistics" (a methodology long employed by Africanist historians) to probe bio-medical social history (p. 167). While a history of European attitudes towards poison can be traced through written texts such as the *Malleus Maleficarum*, such texts do not exist for a pre-colonial African history that was recorded orally. Berry approaches Bantu and Njila languages as an "archive" by using language trees to illustrate how historical changes were reflected in linguistic evolution (p. 167). By using both documentation from poisoning trials and this

careful linguistic method, Berry is able to pay "close attention to the *way* that people of African descent spoke about affliction, relationships, and power" even when these people did not, or could not, explicitly explain their experiences and beliefs (p. 165).

Students without a prior grasp of Atlantic geography and the political context of the Atlantic world may find themselves mired in the many locations and names that the text moves through. As a result, *Poisoned Relations* may be of best use to students who already have at least a cursory understanding of the Atlantic world in which to ground themselves. For such students, *Poisoned Relations* could easily serve as a generative introduction to creative and complex transnational approaches to studying empire and movement. Berry's work is an excellent model of a multifaceted methodological approach to writing and understanding the Atlantic. *Poisoned Relations* is all at once political, medical, judicial, demographic, and linguistic; it is deeply impressive that Berry accomplishes such a feat, and even more impressive that she does so within just 166 pages of concise and beautifully written prose.

New York University Adia E. Cullors

The Great American Transit Disaster: A Century of Austerity, Auto-Centric Planning, and White Flight, by Nicholas Dagen Bloom. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2024. 368 pages. $35.00, cloth. $28.00, paper. $12.50, electronic.

Nicholas Dagen Bloom's *The Great American Transit Disaster* attempts to dispel the popular "streetcar conspiracy" explanation for the failures and frustrations of modern transit in the United States. Instead, Bloom unfurls a more nuanced story about the ways politicians, planners, and voters made decisions that created our transportation systems, and the inflection points when things could have gone a different way for us all. It is clear from Bloom's telling that there was no need for a secret conspiracy—our transit systems were created, dismantled, changed, and gutted all in view of the public. While each city has its own story, Bloom draws an easy-to-follow path that highlights the ways decisions of public or private ownership, demands of austerity or public funding, and race and density considerations in city planning sent each urban system on the eventual destination we live with today.

In Part 1, "Urban Transit Rise and Decline," Bloom sets the stage during the interwar period between World War I and World War II, as the seeds of future transit collapse are sown—austerity, auto-centric planning, and racial conflict. The decline in ridership after World War I hit traction companies (the correct term for the private providers of public transportation) hard, negatively impacting their financial bottom lines. Unfortunately for those companies, the revenue boom years during the war had created a negative public perception of traction

executives and shareholders, leaving little goodwill for public intervention in shoring up private profits. Simultaneously, city planners increasingly focused on the needs of the growing portion of their city residents who drove automobiles, leading to transit line reductions to support traffic flow. Auto-centric planning also emphasized low-density zoning and decentralization, which would hit central business districts hard. Underlying all of this were racist laws and policies, which started the decades-long march towards poorly served black residents riding transit while white elites drove.

After an unprecedented ridership boom during World War II, cities across the country saw massive shifts in transit ridership. In the subsequent sections of the book, Bloom focuses on specific cities divided by the public or private ownership and the existence (or not) of public subsidy. Part 2, "Unsubsidized Private Transit," dives deep into the stories of Baltimore and Atlanta, where white flight, supported by racist homeownership policies and a subsidized federal highway system to connecting suburbs to city centers, hollowed out ridership while austerity policies failed to adapt to postwar financial realities. Bloom details the ways a focus on auto-centric planning to the benefit of suburban commuters, combined with the racial geographies of these segregated cities, left these private transit systems unable to garner political support for system maintenance and improvement. Though both cities did eventually expand their systems to include rail lines, ongoing issues rooted in racist and auto-centric planning continued to limit transit in these cities.

Bloom turns his attention to publicly owned transit systems in Parts 3 and 4. In Part 3, "'Pay as You Go' Public Transit," Bloom focuses on the transit systems in Chicago and Detroit. While both of these cities benefited from early public ownership, the requirement that the systems be self-supporting without subsidy significantly impacted the ability of the systems to modernize during post-World War II ridership declines. In contrast, Part 4, "Public Transit That Worked Better," dives into the transit systems in Boston and San Francisco. In these two cities, the combination of early public ownership and subsidy with urban density and a sustained white ridership allowed the transit systems to not only weather the post-war decline in transit ridership, but also continue to expand with regional transit that attracted wealthy suburbanites to expanded systems.

Overall, *The Great American Transit Disaster* tells a full picture of the making of our modern transit systems in clear and approachable prose. It serves as a useful counterpoint to the well-meaning yet over-simplified understanding of the narratives that place General Motors at the center of transit decline. While the full text could be useful in an upper-level high school classroom, specific sections could also be pulled out for teachers who wish to focus on a specific city or time period. Bloom's use of varied source material is directly addressed throughout the text and also lends itself well to discussion about how history is studied and written, valuable for those who wish to dive deeper into the work of "doing" history in their classrooms.

Atlanta, GA Sara Patenaude

A History of the Muslim World: From its Origins to the Dawn of Modernity, by Michael A. Cook. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024. 895 pages. $39.95, cloth. $39.95, electronic.

Michael Cook's comprehensive and ambitious study, *A History of the Muslim World*, is a captivating exploration of the making and unmaking of states carrying the banner of Islam. It is a cross-genre analysis that puts into conversation a range of literary and documentary sources in addition to material culture. As a political geography, the book provides a sweeping historical survey that begins with the rise of the Muslim world and ends with the encounter between the Muslim world and western modernities post-1800. The historical scope is an impressive strength of the book, as is Cook's balanced consideration of historical contingency. Cook regularly ponders a set of historical possibilities that could have easily taken place, an analytical exercise that presents the reader with a more well-rounded view of change as well as continuity. Cook also offers a comparative assessment of non-Islamic contexts, an approach that helps to situate the various moving parts involved in the machinery of Muslim governance.

The first section reconsiders the rise of states, assessing the significance of regional topography, agricultural potential, fiscal management, and techniques of governance. Beginning in Arabia just prior to the advent of Islam, the first chapter opens with a simple yet illustrative story of a gendered dispute through which the reader can see much larger processes at work, such as tribal relations, cultural norms, identity construction, and state-building measures. This narrative style permeates much of the book and offers a fresh look into the development of complex governing systems. Addressing the successes and failures of Muslim polities, the book displays a multidimensional view of social, cultural, ethnic, and economic relations that is also balanced by a degree of geopolitical pragmatism. Further, this section regularly references the fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun and draws from his theory of government as a suitable lens with which to consider and critique the evolution of Muslim rule.

Like the first section, the second moves between centers and peripheries to reassess how regional distinction, military capacity, ethnic and group identity, and social innovation factored into state-formation and defense. Concentrating on the eleventh through eighteenth centuries, this section weighs a series of historical complications and outcomes based on scientific, architectural, archaeological, and historical studies (p. 511). Routinely relying on the perspective of the seventeenth-century Ottoman statesman Evliyā Chelebī, Cook adds to the richness of historiographical duels over the precursors underlying the eventual decline of Ottoman centralized power. Throughout these chapters, Cook emphasizes the reasons for why ethnic and religious demographics that were representative of different Islamic contexts impacted Muslim rule in tangible and profound ways. This section outlines both the benefits and costs of imperial and state formation in a variety of places from Africa to Southeast Asia. The analysis also demonstrates a clear appreciation for the dynamic role of the environment as an additional factor shaping historical change.

The epilogue concludes with the development of the Muslim world post-1800, ultimately reflecting on encounters with the "West" and modernity. Throughout the text, there is a strong emphasis on regional distinction. Agricultural viability, environmental resources, and the opportunity to generate cultural and fiscal capital all factor into Cook's analysis. The book poses straightforward, insightful questions that engage the reader, and each chapter has helpful summaries at the start. This multifaceted examination of the evolution of Islamic societies is a testament to Cook's expertise in the field, though the sheer length of the text makes it a challenge even for the most intrepid reader. Art and illustrations as well as a consideration of significant epidemiological events, such as plague and other disease outbreaks, would have been welcome additions. Regardless of these rather minor critiques, the text makes for a wonderful pedagogical resource for educators and a treasure trove of fascinating primary source material for students alike. It offers a wealth of information to choose from, as well as a preface containing helpful entries on other suggested encyclopedic manuscripts and maps. *A History of the Muslim World* is a remarkable contribution to the field that deepens our understanding of Islamic history. Masterfully written, it displays a compelling and vibrant view of the power of Islamic politics, culture, and faith.

Augsburg University Taryn Marashi

Discipline Problems: How Students of Color Trouble Whiteness in Schools, by Tadashi Dozono. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024. 200 pages. $120.00, cloth. $29.95, paper. $29.95, electronic.

Tadashi Dozono's *Discipline Problems* uses a queer of color abolitionist methodology to examine how students of color disrupt white structures of knowledge and learning (what he calls "generative trouble") in a New York City high school by looking at student reasoning in relationship to state-mandated curriculum and exams, historical thinking, and the broader structure of public education and government. Dozono starts with the "premise that all students are inherently rational" (p. 19). Through interviews with students seen as "troublemakers" in their school, Dozono expertly weaves together student interviews with critical theory to answer "how…so-called troublemaker students of color trouble[d] the school's white systems of disciplining reason" (p. 17). His work contributes to conversations about educational equity and inclusive approaches to schooling by expanding our understanding of culturally sustaining pedagogy through this critical case study. He calls on teachers to rethink white education systems in their classrooms by following students' lead and believing that "all students have interests and questions worth pursuing, if given the space and time to wonder" (p. 135). Dozono offers examples from his teaching practice to demonstrate how this study challenged him to redesign his curriculum around student interest and inquiry-based learning.

In Chapter 1 of the book, Dozono interrogates how the New York State social studies curriculum and regents exam disciplines students' reasoning to comply with white structures of knowledge. He argues that rather than serving as windows and mirrors of students' experiences, the curriculum acts as gates and walls, blocking student access and denying recognition of student reasoning. Chapter 2 turns to historical thinking in the fields of history and social studies pedagogy and questions what is lost in the social studies classroom when student thinking is rigidly confined to a list of skills and past—not present—events. In comparing what historians and pedagogues define as worth investigating in the social studies classroom against interviews with students about how they see themselves in the curriculum, Dozono explains how traditional approaches to social studies curriculum box student reasoning, interests, and experiences out of the classroom structure. Finally, Chapter 3 turns to "the state itself" (p. 101) by looking at the rationality of students' distrust of the governmental systems that have historically existed to oppress them. Dozono defines the purpose of the "state" (whether it be the Department of Education, Capitalism, or the U.S. Government) as the "creat[ion of] an education system that acts to maintain the interests of the dominant class" (p. 107). Here, Dozono rationalizes the paranoia students exhibit in the face of oppression and uses it to understand how to frame social studies instruction that values students' reasoning, even when it seems unreasonable.

This book is best used for teachers who want to challenge how they approach their historical instruction by encouraging a reexamination of how they expect their students to engage with history. Rather than focusing solely on whether students' answers to questions are correct, Dozono calls on teachers to honor all students' reasoning as valid. White structures of learning, Dozono argues, require students to fit into the white educational system and, as a result, students of color whose reasoning is not seen as valid are pushed out of educational spaces. Dozono challenges teachers to listen to and honor student reasoning by using it to drive inquiry-based learning that uplifts students' lived experiences and knowledge structures in what is taught and how it is assessed. Dozono writes, "Some of the students who asked the most intriguing questions were also the students who seemed to cause the most 'trouble' in class" (p. 7). Teachers might find this research useful as they conceptualize their courses. For example, I used this book in my teaching methods course during a lesson on equity in the classroom. Others might find it a good addition to courses on educational equity or as a framework for redesigning curriculum in history courses at any grade level.

Dozono's work, like all critical case study research, sometimes lacks a clear connection between the theory and research and the broader usability of the findings within a field that craves practicality. Dozono writes in the tension between what education ought to be and what it is. The logistics of organizing and running public education and ensuring educational experiences that are inclusive and emancipatory is the great question of our time. The scalability of what Dozono proposes remains a challenge, although not impossible, in the current structure of public education. Ultimately, Dozono's work exemplifies what public education could be when student reasoning is valued.

University of Delaware Bonnie Lewis

The Master in Bondage: Factory Workers in China, 1949-2019, by Huaiyin Li. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023. 330 pages. $95.00, cloth. $32.00, paper. $32.00, electronic.

Huaiyin Li's latest book, *The Master in Bondage: Factory Workers in China, 1949-2019*, is a masterful addition to the literature on workplaces and workers' lives in Mao's China and after. The book's title overstates the thesis—although state enterprise workers in China were not in fact "masters of the factories," and did not achieve the same degree of worker control as found in Yugoslavian factories, for example, is it also inaccurate to say that they were "in bondage," especially compared to the enslavement of workers in both pre- and-post-socialist China. Most teachers reading this can surely understand the difference between tenure and slavery. The thesis, however, is excellent and the book skillfully explains many important aspects of labor relations and industrialization in the People's Republic of China.

The research is very impressive, utilizing archival records from Chinese state-run factories in several major cities. Even more impressive, Prof. Li and his colleagues interviewed nearly one hundred retired factory workers and cadres (administrators), which provide excellent insights into the day-to-day operations of China's socialist factories. The book also engages skillfully with the existing literature and references studies of Chinese workers from the 1960s through the twenty-first century.

Li uses the term "substantive governance" to describe the pragmatic approach to factory management adopted in the 1950s and 1960s. This entailed the interaction between formal and informal institutions and codes of conduct in managing labor relations. In contrast with earlier studies, Li states that this system produced neither dictatorship nor complacency, but rather a "dual equilibrium" that allowed managers to achieve the production goals set for them by the state bureaucracy and workers to protect their rights and interests under a system of impressive benefits and lifetime employment, but few opportunities for advancement or mobility (the "bondage" of the book's title).

The book is both theoretically sophisticated and thoroughly empirical, effectively crystallizing the complex realities of workplace management in the People's Republic of China in a comprehensible manner made especially accessible by Li's use of oral histories and specific, factory-level examples. Li's ability to combine a sophisticated theoretical approach with grassroots historical research makes the book most valuable. Another appealing aspect the book is that it looks at the same factories through the many challenges and changes between 1949 and 2019, demonstrating how the "dual equilibrium" of labor management and workers' rights was fragile and dependent on the wider political climate. For example, in Chapter 5, Li describes how during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976, worker radicalism disturbed this equilibrium and adversely affected production. Similarly, the power shift in favor of factory managers, and eventually shareholders, during the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s (described in Chapter 6) likewise upset this balance to the detriment of workers' ability to control their working conditions and protect their rights.

The Master in Bondage makes many important contributions to the field, but it is not without its shortcomings. Historians tend to look for information where the sources are most accessible, and Li, like previous researchers, focuses primarily on state-run factories in major cities that have left extensive archives. This has left other important sectors of China's socialist economy—collective enterprises and rural industries, or formerly private factories nationalized in 1956—out of the historical analysis. The focus on state-run industries furthermore leaves out most women workers. Although women appear among the workers interviewed, and often provide valuable insights into how men and women advanced their interests in the socialist system, gender plays almost no role in Li's analysis. Similarly, Li pays little attention to interactions between different levels of the bureaucracy, the importance of illegal "grey" markets, or the revolutionary goals of the Marxist state, which Li tends to dismiss as mere "ideology," but which were an important aspect of the motivations and incentives present in the Maoist workplace.

This book is valuable to anyone interested in understanding core aspects of China's industrial economy and society in the twentieth century, especially labor relations and factory management. Li's book offers a wonderfully complex, detailed, and human picture of life in China's socialist factories over the course of seven decades, and the notes and bibliography are excellent guides to further reading. The book is not suitable for most high-school students and is not recommended for classroom use. But any teacher seeking to include a historical and sociological approach to the Chinese revolution in their modern world history classes will benefit from reading this book.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt Robert Cliver

Dear Unknown Friend: The Remarkable Correspondence between American and Soviet Women, by Alexis Peri, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2024. 290 pages. $35.00, cloth. $35.00, electronic.

In *Dear Unknown Friend: The Remarkable Correspondence between American and Soviet Women*, Alexis Peri analyzes letters written between everyday U.S. and Soviet women from 1943 to 1955 in a pen-pal program that was at various times encouraged, allowed, and repressed by their respective governments. Peri argues that these letters show connections across Cold War East and West during a time when most assume an Iron Curtain divided the two blocs, offering a window into the lives of U.S. and Soviet women in the postwar period, and profoundly influencing the lives of their writers. Throughout, Peri explores the "pen friends' style of diplomacy" centered "around human connection rather than debate or negotiation," and recognizes that "nearly every letter contains some mixture of peacemaking and propagandizing" (pp. 3, 7). In doing so, she expertly unpacks letters written at a tumultuous moment where these women sought, above all else, to create positive feelings between their countries.

Peri utilizes a rich vein of thousands of letters written between U.S. and Soviet women in the early Cold War, facilitated by the Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee and the U.S. National Council of American Soviet Friendship's Committee of Women, as her primary archival source base. Her ability to read closely and deeply what the letter writers wrote is evident as the letters became sites of "highly personalized performances of the self, of womanhood, and of the nation" (p. 15). She takes these women and their letters seriously, expanding our view of what constituted international relations during the early Cold War. Peri adeptly shows how these women engaged in "not a onetime stunt" like the kitchen debate between Nixon and Khrushchev, "but an ongoing exchange of ideas" that planted "seeds of peace and friendship" as broader tensions between their countries grew (p. 122).

These seeds formed the foundation of pen-pal relationships between 319 pairs of women, including some that reached a length of thirty-six sets of letters across a decade of writing (pp. 6, 10). While based on mutual understanding and hope for peace, the women's letters were never short of discussion over whether collectivism or individual liberty was the best path to achieve their goals. Peri takes pains to show how the women's "correspondence gives a complex, dialectical picture of the relationship between societal norms and individual actions," as the women practiced and believed in the systems their countries championed and simultaneously grappled with the common, complex expectations put on women as workers, mothers, and citizens (p. 92). Chapter 1 shows how women writing during World War II sought to support one another and "practiced and personalized the alliance" between their countries (p. 55). Chapter 2 analyzes how their "peace talk" opened the letter writers up to complex discussions about the world. Chapter 3 reveals how conversations about work inform our understanding of the broader societal challenges both U.S. and Soviet women faced in the postwar world. Chapter 4 examines the shared importance of childrearing for the women, serving as a touchstone for some of their most ardent debates. Chapter 5 analyzes the gendered nature of the U.S. and Soviet crackdowns on the pen-pals in the early 1950s, as well as the resistance to and consequences of the repression for the writers themselves.

Due to its clarity in writing and specific source base, *Dear Unknown Friend* has the potential to be used at all levels of history education and scholarship. High school students could learn from individual stories in the book that show a complex interchange of ideas across seemingly impermeable Cold War boundaries. Two that stand out are letters written by Mary Roe Hull and Nina Morozova about women's particular role in promoting peace (Chapter 2) and by Celia Wesle and El'ga Koff debating the benefits of individualism, collectivism, social ills, and democratic life for a good childhood (Chapter 4). Undergraduates would find Chapter 3, "What Do You Do for Work?" an illuminating analysis of how demands on women changed in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in the postwar world. Graduate students studying U.S.-Soviet relations, the Cold War, or gender and women's history would benefit from the book as a powerful example of utilizing a rich source base, careful primary source evaluation, and smart contextualization. Experts in U.S.-Soviet relations will find that this book is a powerful addition to a growing field of scholarship

reconsidering what is "foreign relations" and who can conduct it. Anyone interested in twentieth-century U.S. or U.S.S.R. history, the early Cold War, women's and gender history, or the history of emotions will find important insights in this deeply researched and carefully contextualized monograph.

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey Adam J. Stone

Open Admissions: The Poetics and Pedagogy of Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich in the Era of Free College, by Danica Savonick. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024. 264 pages. $104.95, cloth. $27.95, paper. $24.95, electronic.

What makes a teacher-activist? How does one offer a radical education? Where do open admissions policies and educational opportunities programs push society? How can teaching shape the lives of both teachers and students? Danica Savonick probes into the classrooms of four of the twentieth-century's most prolific writers to answer these questions. *Open Admissions* is an exploration of the transformative power of student-centered teaching set in the era of free college. Savonick demonstrates a powerful commitment to the teacher-activists featured in this study and the belief that we have much to learn from efforts in the classroom.

The literary contributions of Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich continue to inspire a plethora of biographies, documentaries, textual analyses, and panel discussions. In the fall of 1968, all four women accepted teaching positions at City College of New York. It can be suggested that the stars aligned to ensure the crossing of their paths, but *Open Admissions* presents the historical context for such an important moment. In 1965, City College instituted the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) educational program. All four women saw this program as an opportunity to follow through on their political beliefs. Teaching writing classes to predominantly working-class, Black, and Puerto Rican students, these teacher-activists exploited the liberatory potential of education. In these classrooms, the SEEK students found themselves inspired to protest the exclusionary policies of the CUNY system. The result: the introduction of an open admissions policy offering free tuition to every graduate of a city high school. While their published works stand firm in the spotlight, these writers' labor as teachers and their tenure at City College of New York seldom receives the same attention. These women understood their labor inside and outside of the classroom to be inextricably linked, giving way to discussions and assignments that empowered students to find liberation in the written word.

Educators will find that *Open Admissions* serves as a guide to developing a more equitable pedagogy in theory and practice. Each chapter probes into the classroom of a featured teacher-activist, providing biographical information that frames their time at City College. Savonick's analysis of their teaching methods is thorough and thought-provoking. The narrative invites educators to contemplate

their own classroom dynamics and provides examples for different approaches. They may be inspired, or perhaps even surprised, by the fluidity of the SEEK classrooms. For instance, Bambara did not plan lessons in advance because the students were active contributors in determining "what they would read, what they would write, and how their learning would be evaluated" (p. 20). For some, the student-centered teaching method does not resemble teaching at all because it abandons the hierarchical structure that characterizes the traditional classroom. However, Savonick's research describes the transformation Bambara's students underwent when they were given equal control of their education. They found their voice through the assignments and went on to make demands upon the institution to improve their lived realities. In describing SEEK educators, Savonick explains, "Here were educators who aimed not to cultivate the talent of an exceptional few but to undo the damages of a racist society…They understood teaching not as charity but as part of broader movements for collective liberation" (p. 104).

Open Admissions relishes the success of such transgressive teaching methods and argues for the importance of not only open admissions policies, but also teachers dedicated to broader social causes. Nonetheless, Savonick acknowledges that these educators taught under different circumstances when compared to our contemporary moment. Despite serving as part-time teachers, these women received salaries comparable to today's tenure-track professor. A living wage allowed these writers to develop new pedagogies and assignments, build rapport with students, and observe their colleagues' classrooms. They did not experience the burden of worry over healthcare, childcare, food and housing security, or the pressure to exchange passion for survival. In presenting these disparities, Savonick advocates free education as well as free basic needs in our collective pursuit of a better society.

Savonick's study promises hope and possibility within the bureaucratic structure of the academy. The archival teaching materials (syllabi, graded work, marginal notes, correspondences, etc.) at the heart of this research are the remains of busy days, robust classroom discussions, and prolonged student engagement. Melding the history of CUNY's open admission policies and the personal history of these prolific writers, Savonick delivers readers to the conclusion that education is a joint and equal effort between teachers and students where there exists potential for all parties to be transformed.

Rutgers University, New Brunswick Keiara Price

The History Teacher
by the SOCIETY FOR HISTORY EDUCATION

The History of
The History Teacher

Collaboration, Cooperation, Innovation, and Excellence

In 1940, the **Teachers' History Club** at the University of Notre Dame created the "Quarterly Bulletin of the Teachers' History Club" to improve the learning experience in the history classroom.

By 1967, the expanding collaboration of educators reorganized as the **History Teachers' Association** and decided to transform the bulletin into an academic journal—*The History Teacher*.

In 1972, the association transferred guardianship of *The History Teacher* to coordinating faculty members at the Department of History at California State University, Long Beach. In the interest of independence and self-determination, the associated teachers incorporated as a non-profit organization.

The Society for History Education, Inc. (SHE) was recognized by the State of California in 1972.

In 1998, *The History Teacher* began publishing the winning student essays from the annual National History Day contest, in recognition of the impact that history teachers have in shaping the next generation of young historians.

In 2012, the Society became a leader among publishers, offering full-text, open access to recent archives of *The History Teacher* at its website, thehistoryteacher.org.

In 2014, *The History Teacher* launched full-color covers on both front *and* back covers, showcasing high-quality historical images specifically designed to spark classroom discussion.

For 2025, *The History Teacher* breezes into **Volume 58**, and we ask you to join us in celebrating history teachers throughout the world and throughout time.

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thehistoryteacher.org/join