



*TOM SPERLINGER*

Are universities for  
everyone?



THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

THE B.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION

I, Elizabeth Frances Brown  
 born at Belfast  
 in the County of Down on the 25th day of July 1875  
 do hereby request the Senate of the  
 Royal University to admit me to the B.A. Degree Examination\* to be held at Dublin.

I desire to be examined in the following group of Subjects as specified in the Regulations of the University.

English, French and German  
 (Modern Literature Group)

Letters addressed to me before the time of Examination should be directed

to 20 Atlantic Row  
Belfast

The Fee for the Examination is £1; it must be lodged with this Form. Candidates presenting themselves in person to any group of Subjects must pay the fee for each group.

P.O. (Money Order) Order

Each Candidate who attends the Examination must pay a further fee of 40, before being admitted to the Degree.

Hilman House, Belfast  
110

\* For Date of Examination and \* List of the Examining Forms of Application, &c., see Regulations of the University.





VICTORIA COLLEGE,

—••• BELFAST •••—

THIS PREMIUM

WAS AWARDED TO

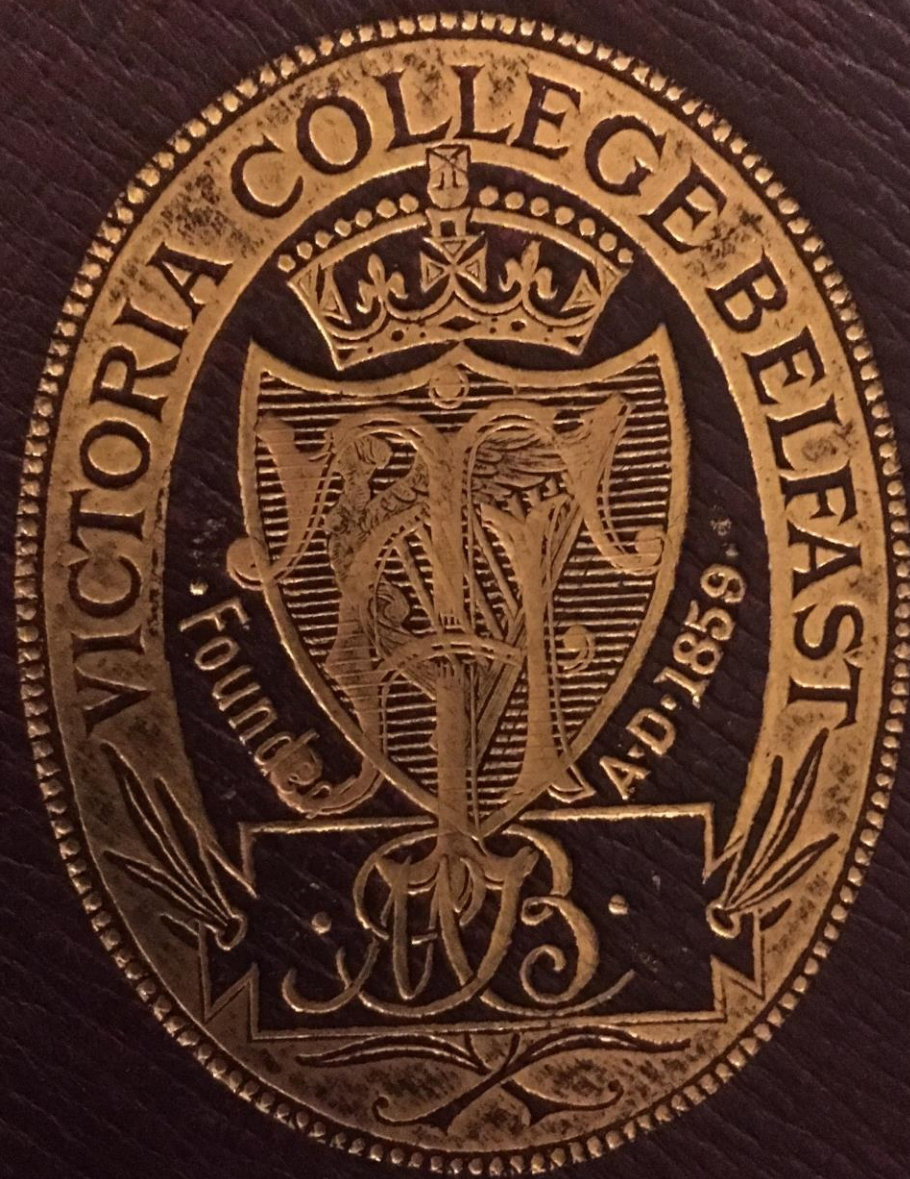
Miss *Lizzie Brown*  
for ~~proficiency~~ taking First  
Place in Junior Intermediate  
Class. Division I.

AT THE EXAMINATIONS,

*Midsummer 1891*

Signed,

*H. Brown*





A black and white photograph of Adrienne Rich. She is seated in a library, surrounded by stacks of books. She is wearing a dark, patterned button-down shirt and has her right hand resting on her head. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with bookshelves and stacks of books.

*TOWARDS A WOMAN-  
CENTRED UNIVERSITY*

**Adrienne Rich**

- (1) Childcare would be available for children of all students, staff, and faculty, with additional places for community children, at a subsidized rate that would make it effectively open to all. This is an absolutely necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the kinds of change we envision.
- (2) Childcare would be of the highest quality; no merely custodial center would be tolerated. The early nurture and education of the children would be as flexible and imaginative as possible. There would be a conscious counterthrust against the sex-role programming of patriarchal society.
- (3) The centers would be staffed, under experienced and qualified directorship, by women and men who have chosen and been trained for this kind of work. They would be assisted by several kinds of people:
  - (a) College students, female and male, who want experience in early education or just want to spend time with children. (Several experienced baby-sitters could work with several times the number of children they ordinarily "sit" with in private homes, and with more expert supervision.)
  - (b) High-school students similar to the college students in (a).
  - (c) Older women and men from the community—"grandparents" with special qualifications, informal or formal.
  - (d) Parents who want to share their children's lives on a part-time basis during the working day.
  - (e) Apprentices from graduate programs in education, pediatrics, psychology, the arts, etc.

The children would thus be in contact with a wide range of

with Michelle Rosaldo when she writes:

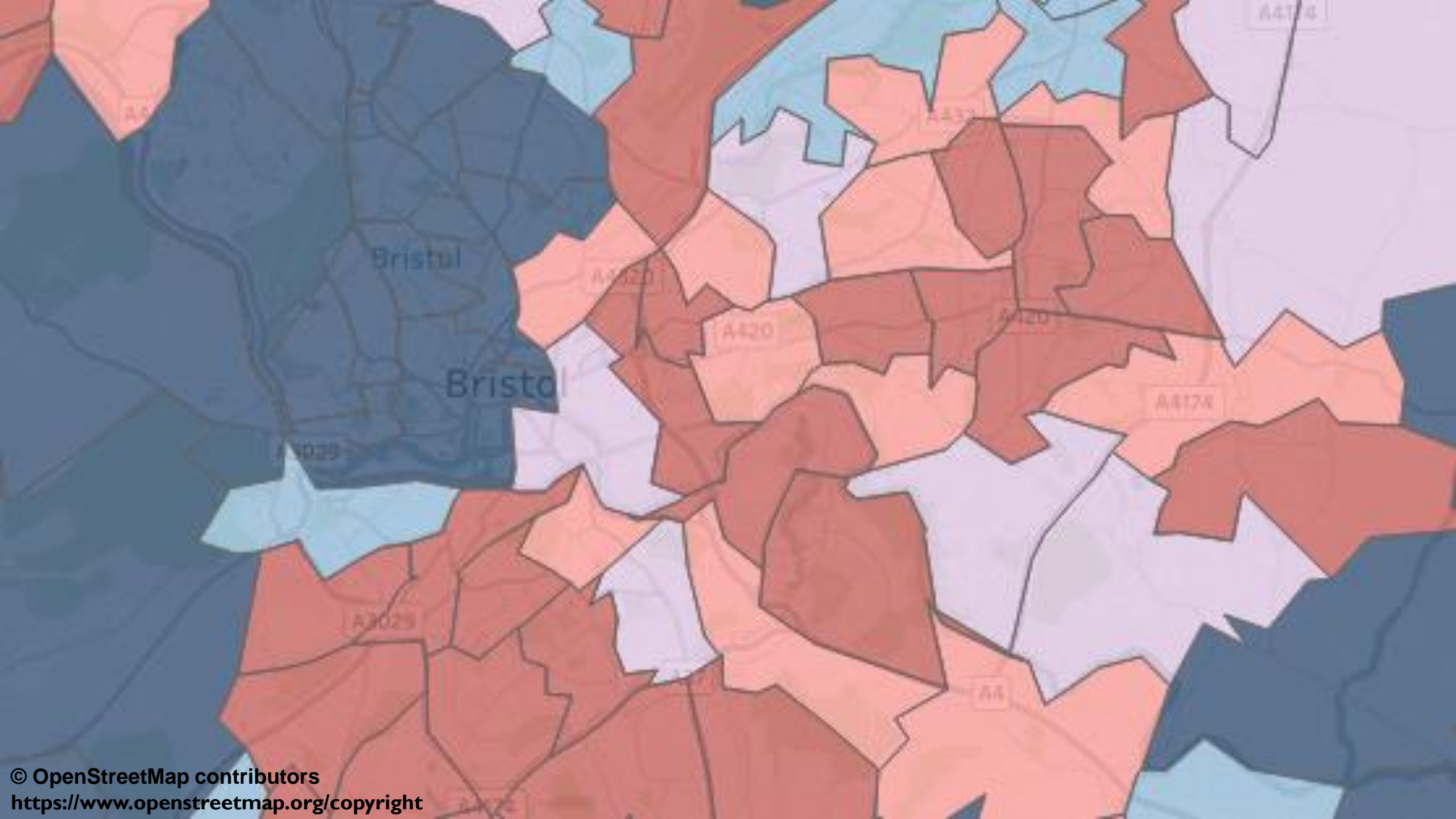
. . . American society is . . . organized in a way that creates and exploits a radical distance between private and public, domestic and social, female and male . . . this conflict is at the core of the contemporary rethinking of sex roles. . . . If the public world is to open its doors to more than an elite among women, the nature of work itself will have to be altered, and the asymmetry between work and the home reduced. For this we must . . . bring men into the sphere of domestic concerns and responsibilities.<sup>26</sup>

- (4) There should be flexibility enough to allow parents to, say, take their children to the university museum or for lunch in the cafeteria if they so desire. Nursing mothers should be able to come and feed their babies.
- (5) A well-baby clinic, with both medical and dental care, should be regularly provided for all the children as a service of the centers. A referral service for mothers with physical or psychic problems should be available.
- (6) There should be opportunities for staff and parents of the centers to discuss, in small groups, ideas of childrearing, criticisms of the running of the center, and ways in which it can better serve its clients.

While excellent universal early childhood care should be a major priority in any reasonably humane society, the primary and moving impulse behind the children's center would be to help equalize the position of women.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>In M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1974), p. 42.





---

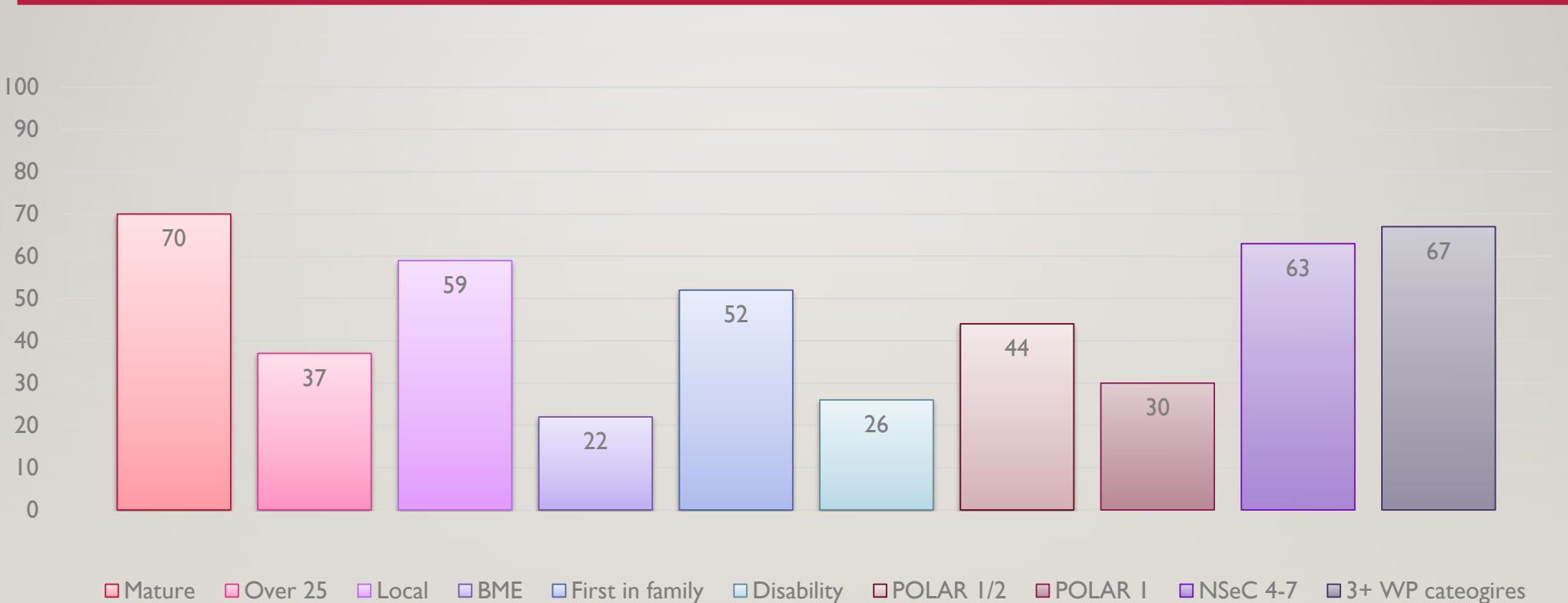
Full  
participation

Communities  
set priorities

Lifelong  
learning

Open  
admissions

# WHO ARE THE STUDENTS? (2017)



... and 48/52% male and female



# WHO IS THE STUDENT?



## WHO IS THE IN THE ROOM?

Sometimes, I'd present an idea that's an important idea in [...] my discipline. Just seeing what people [think] who are not primed to understand that idea as important. How does that match, or not match your experience? Or: where does an idea or what someone experiences as a fact come up against what you believe? That was really interesting and being able to make sure that didn't create unnecessary conflict in the space. Two twins who were from East Africa came who talked about how someone had done black magic on them when they were babies. I know enough about the political context that they come from to understand and place this idea but other people in the classroom were like, 'What? You say you were cursed?' [laughs] Another woman was like, 'What if they told you that you'd die?' and I was like, 'Whoa, let me try to help us hold this conversation together.' I get what she's talking about, and it's interesting and I believe her, but I understand your response.

Mwenz Blell, quoted in *Who are universities for?*

## WHO IS THE IN THE ROOM?

I saw one of the people from that class recently, I just ran into her. She really liked the class and it had been mind-expanding in that way, which made her want to study anthropology, that she was able to come away from something where she disagreed, with a much greater understanding that was more important than whether or not she disagreed with it. Seeing the way that happened and what kind of responses people had to things was really interesting to me from a research point of view, but seeing we could resolve that was also really important to me as an anthropologist. There's a bigger question – of the possibility of peace – that's in my mind. When we let everybody have a voice, can we get to a place where everybody has spoken and we can still all live with each other?

Mwenzu Blell, quoted in *Who are universities for?*

## WHAT IS SUCCESS?

S: They were in a different place [than the university]. So two heroin addicts, no, three, one was like a real East London bank robber, just got out for bank robbery, was completely mad, and two long-term addicts. And I just showed up with some Charles Dickens. And [we] took it from there. I developed a structure to work within and handouts and exercises and encouraged people to [...] go and find something.

Q: And how did you know how to do all of that?

S: I think 50% of it was from my own experience with literature and my intuition with the people I was dealing with, just sussing out where they were coming from and using my experience of literature to see what would fit with them. And 50% of it was what I learnt at the university.

Q: So, it was a real combination of life experience and what the university could offer?

S: Yeah, and because I was representing the university and I always had to remember that. I was a student from Bristol University but I was also trying to get across: "I'm just like you." And I knew that these guys were ... I knew what they were coming with [the attitude]: "This is not for me, ah, it's alright for you". Somehow, they would have seen me as different because I'm representing Bristol University. So, I didn't want to go in there and tell my story like straight away, I wanted the literature to do the work, but over time, bit by bit, I would if I had to. And I have been known to get quite excitable and quite dynamic in a group. So, that transferred onto others in the group.

# WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Q: So, there's this perception that people at university are different to the likes of...?

S: Yeah, I think there is. I think, you know, and it's completely wrong, you know, but I think a lot of disadvantaged communities are stuck in their own story. It's a poverty story, it's a victim story, it's a self pitier story, it's a limited story. There's no examples, you know, you can't say like "Oh he went on and changed", nobody changes their life.

Q: And where does that come from? S: Well if you find yourself in prison over and over and over again, if you find yourself on the streets or if you're a girl who's been abused, domestic violence over and over again, it's just part of it. You start to believe you're no good and, you know, which isn't true but it can be very wearing for them and for everybody else [...] It's like you'd ask them, "What do you think of Bristol University?", and they'd say: "It's nothing to do with me".

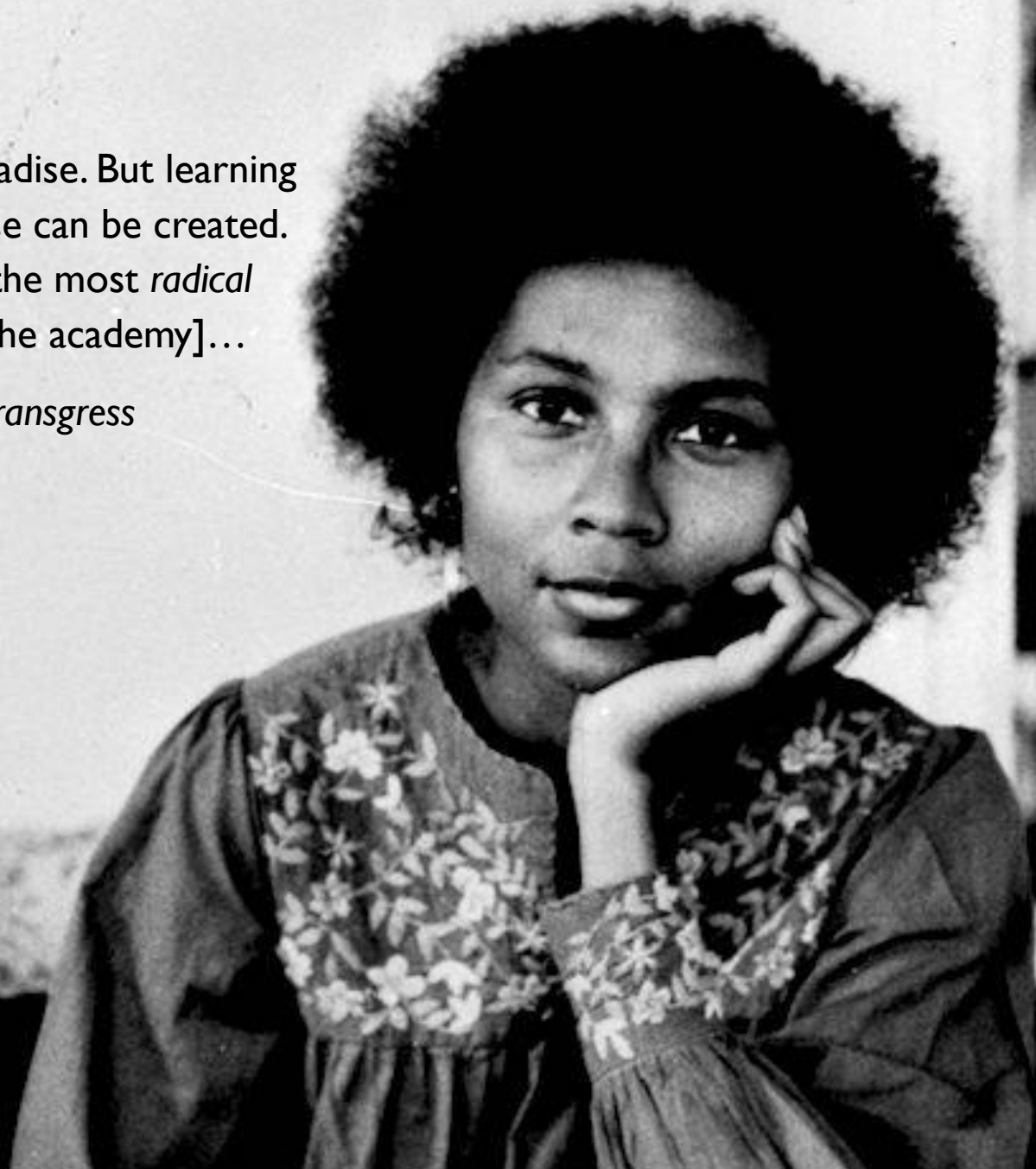
Q: Why is it nothing to do with them?

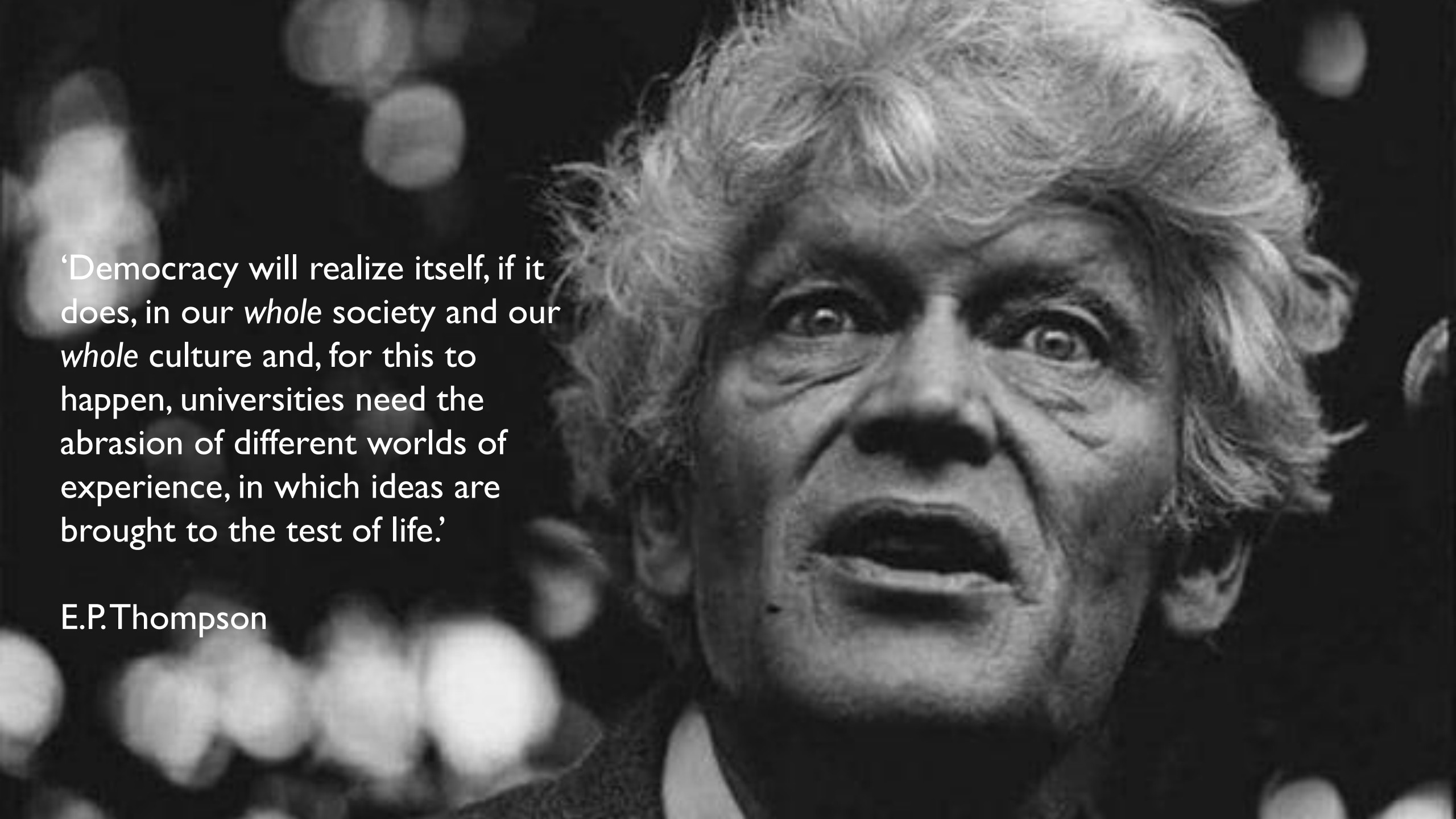
S: Because, again, it's not yours, it's not for you, you know, somehow you stand out, you know. That's what I felt. It doesn't matter [now]. I can walk in there now to ... You know, I'd feel guilty at first, walking in through by the two security guys. I'm like, "What would they do if I'm in here robbing?" or, "What's he want?" But that's the experience of a lot of these guys if you ask them. They say: "Oh I don't belong here. Somebody's going to tap me: 'Can I help you?'" Well I can walk in here now [head] held high: "Alright guys, good afternoon". I don't need to explain myself. It's my university.



The academy is not paradise. But learning  
is a place where paradise can be created.  
The *classroom* remains the most *radical*  
space of possibility [in the academy]...

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*



A black and white close-up portrait of E.P. Thompson. He has short, curly, light-colored hair and is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some blurred light spots.

‘Democracy will realize itself, if it does, in our *whole* society and our *whole* culture and, for this to happen, universities need the abrasion of different worlds of experience, in which ideas are brought to the test of life.’

E.P. Thompson