

Engendering Knowledge and its Nurture

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In her 2011 text, *Engendering Curriculum History*, curriculum theorist Petra Munroe Hendry views the history of Western knowledge production and reproduction through the lens of gender. True to her time and field, Hendry seeks to disrupt familiar disciplinary narratives, citing Foucault's notion of *effective history* as grounds for her claim that history "becomes "effective" to the degree it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself" (p. 4).

These are large and not entirely transparent aims, and yet attentive readers willing to take Hendry at her word may find that this early characterization of her purposes does resonate in some aspects with their experiences of this text. That this will be true in different ways for different readers seems inevitable given the abundance and eclecticism of the sources upon which Hendry draws. While all of Hendry's readers are likely to experience some sense of discontinuity, the key question will be to what extent such feelings foster new thinking about what has been and may be achieved and desired regarding women's place in the construction and nurture of human knowledge.

Hendry has clustered a far-flung collection of myths, portraits, observations, and theoretical insights around five historically

Books Discussed

Grumet, M., (1988).
*Bitter Milk: Women
and Teaching*. Amherst,
MA: University of
Massachusetts Press.

Munroe Hendry, P.,
(2011). *Engendering
Curriculum History*.
New York: Routledge.

situated discourses, beginning with so-called pre-history and then moving to the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, industrializing America, and Progressive schools. This is a vast temporal and conceptual territory, and while Hendry primarily concerns herself with Western realms of experience, she does not entirely confine herself there. Rather Hendry treats questions related to human knowledge re/production processes writ large alongside those specific to Western knowledge traditions.

Together, these five discourses chart a chronological course from what Hendry casts as the largely undifferentiated experience of gender among early hunter-gatherers¹ through to the modernist regulatory constructions with which Westerners grapple today. In the process, Hendry frames any number of matters for her own and the reader's further consideration, some portion of which might be grouped according to the following three themes: 1) the tension between what Hendry terms binary and dualistic constructions of gender; 2) the desired relation between the rational and the irrational in knowledge production systems and gender's relevance to this matter; and 3) the distinct, yet intertwined, roles that Enlightenment thought and pragmatism have played and might yet play in the further expansion of the liberatory potential of contemporary thought systems.

These themes encompass many of the more perturbing issues that emerged for me over the course of this work. Without entirely clarifying her use of the two terms, Hendry suggests that Western civilization transitioned from a primal, *dualistic* construction of gender to increasingly binary constructions across the timeframe treated here, raising questions throughout regarding the enculturation, regulation, and, as Hendry argues, eventual *colonization* of women's minds.

Regarding the relation between the rational and the irrational, shall we choose to understand women as generally more intuitive, psychically grounded, and/or interpersonally attuned than men and, if so, does this suggest some special role for women within postmodern knowledge construction processes? What would this mean for liberatory social and political movements across the globe? What would this mean for distinctively democratic deliberations?

Regarding this nation's liberal democratic heritage, to what extent do and should contemporary feminists continue to draw on Enlightenment principles regarding human equality, intellectual freedom, and the role of reason in their efforts to further their claims as fully participating cultural members? As to pragmatism, what might curriculum theorists, specifically, still want and need from the North American pragmatic tradition?

I carry these questions with me as I review Hendry's discourses below and then end with a discussion of a few of the intersections and contrasts between Hendry's history and Madeleine Grumet's now classic rumination on women's knowledge, written over twenty-five years ago (Grumet, 1988). Although too recent a work to have qualified for the AAACS canon (see, www.aaacs.org), I assume that Grumet's *Bitter Milk* will be welcomed there in its time as a foundational text of the reconceptualized curriculum studies field.

Imaging Curriculum

In her first discourse, *Imaging Curriculum*, Hendry seeks to evoke an overall feeling for the psychic referents of the nomadic and polytheistic tribespeople of the Paleolithic Period, based primarily on ancient creation myths, and to encourage her readers' imaginative engagement with this prehistoric lifeworld. In inviting her readers back to the dawn of human meaning-making, Hendry seeks to portray a primal sense of gender as dualistic (p. 36). The reader is asked to imagine a time when human categories were intuitively grounded and the boundaries between male and female remained porous and relatively undefined.

Hendry argues that current historical, anthropological, and religious scholarship supports her move toward giving serious academic attention to what in profound ways must remain an imagined time in our species' past.² Yet the scholarship she treats is primarily literary and points toward a widespread—Hendry suggests universal—worship of life-giving and death-dealing goddesses. At the same time, Hendry claims that during these prehistoric eons “gender, understood as distinct, separate identities of male and female, would have been inconceivable” and that the “differentiation of heaven/earth, God/man, male/female, subject/object and its resultant epistemology ... evolved slowly and ultimately codified itself by 600 CE” (pp. 36-7).

While this first discourse will likely suggest for readers a time when an all-encompassing sense of awe and fear connected humans with the natural world and their gods in ways that precluded stark conceptual bifurcations, Hendry's discussion actually suggests that gender has always operated powerfully within the human psyche. Indeed, I would imagine that the four distinctions that Hendry sees as having been codified by 600 CE have likely driven the development of human thought from the species' earliest days.

Certainly human prehistory and the eventual shift Hendry speaks of from “an oral, horizontal, mytho-poetic culture to one that is written, vertical, and logo-analytical” (p. 33)—generally seen as corresponding to the growth of trade and farming and the concurrent settling of towns and cities—should interest us as curriculum scholars. At this point, Hendry turns to the divergent directions that the Greco-Roman world, the Jewish people, Plato, the Gnostics, and other early Christians moved in creating new ontological and epistemological frameworks, focusing primarily on the relationship of these various traditions with mysticism and the written word.

Among these movements, Greek mythology and the Torah are seen as having consolidated the earliest cultural commitments to an all-powerful male deity (pp. 40-1). Hendry's suggestion that this only becomes possible as men recognize their role in procreation and begin to experience themselves as potent cultural agents can be seen as setting the stage for all that is to come. Zeus rules with near impunity, and the Jewish covenant with Yahweh precludes all alternate understandings of the universe, necessitating cultural exclusions and suppressions Hendry casts as “the mark of gender” (p. 44).

Embodying Curriculum

Once she arrives within the years of recorded human history, Hendry commences with a long and rich series of introductions to many of the understudied and under-appreciated women of the Western intellectual heritage. In the Middle Ages, these are all Catholic mystics: Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Antwerp, and Teresa of Avila. In this second discourse, *Embodying Curriculum*, and the next, *Decolonizing Curriculum*, Hendry focuses on the ways in which a number of extraordinary women were able to subvert, while at the same time working from within, the restrictive gender constructions of their day.

In his review of Kyle Harper's recent *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*, Peter Brown argues that Christian moral responses to the wanton sexual behavior of the Greeks and Romans were driven at different times by an antipathy toward the sexual oppressions of slavery and by a religious elevation of the power of the human will (Brown, 2013). The second of these arguments intersects with Hendry's discussion of the ascetic sensibility of the medieval church.

While women, who had been included in the early Christian church, also participated in monastic life throughout the early medieval period, their authority as intellectual agents and leaders came to be increasingly circumscribed within the consolidating Catholic hierarchy beginning in the 4th century. Hendry recounts how this shift corresponds to the growing hold of a Neo-Platonic strain within Catholicism that saw the human spirit's access to God as constrained by the materiality of the human body. Women, seen as more inextricably bound to bodily experience, were viewed as less capable of spiritual transcendence.

By the 12th century, however, Hendry tells us that women in leadership positions within their monasteries had located cultural openings that allowed them to represent their physical selves as unknowing vehicles for the word of God. In addition to reconceptualizing the female body as a potential conduit for spiritual truth, these mystics and scholars were able to reposition the human body as of a piece with God's creation and as enabling an intimate connection to the love and suffering of Jesus Christ.

These moves were supported by and, in turn, supported a renewed interest in and attention to Christ's humanity and suffering within the broader church. Hendry suggests that popular protests against a corrupt and distant church hierarchy helped to create a political climate wherein these passionate, articulate, and well positioned women were permitted to reinscribe female spiritual capacities in so dramatic a manner.

Although the aims and emphases of Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Antwerp, and Teresa of Avila varied, all three women worked from within the established church hierarchy of their day, framing their arguments in relation to the Bible and existing biblical exegesis, with exacting attention to their sociopolitical circumstances.³ Although compelled to craft arguments of great delicacy and erudition, these women had to renounce all possibility of their personal intellectual

insight and to attribute all they knew to the bodily access they had been granted—due to their exceptional and at times extraordinary bodily sacrifices—to religious truth. Even so, Hendry argues, we need to recognize the ways in which these women “authorized themselves as knowers.”

Working with and through the dominant religious and gender discourses of their day, they understood the body as a site of knowing. Against the normative theology of Christianity which posited women (read “body”) as the source of evil and sin, these women reinterpret the creation story not as one of “fall,” or leaving the body, but as one of creation, as a site of generativity. ... Knowing is not a result of transcending the body, but staying embodied, trusting our lived experience (p. 97).

By the 1500s, women claiming special access to the divine were threatened by witch hunts and accusations of sorcery. Teresa of Avila, who William James said “[had] a powerful intellect of the practical order ... wrote admirable descriptive psychology, [and] possessed a will equal to any emergency, great talent for politics and business, a buoyant disposition, and a first-rate literary style,” lived under the threat of the Spanish Inquisition throughout her life. In his reflections upon her writings, James rues the “paltry religious ideals” that granted such an intelligence “such poor employment” (cited in Hendry, pp. 94-5).

Decolonizing Curriculum

In her third discourse, Hendry argues that “while the 12th through the 15th centuries had seen a flourishing of women’s ways of knowing and being in the world, the emergence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of “rationalism” and “scientific method” as dominant ideologies, dependent on a body/mind binary, functioned to “colonize” not only women’s bodies, but all bodies” (p. 101, quotation marks original). As suggested above, this claim introduces disquieting tensions between the concepts of enculturation, regulation, and colonization.

Like James, I do not recognize what Hendry portrays of female scholarship in late medieval times as any form of “flourishing,” except, perhaps, relative to the even more oppressive intellectual prohibitions that confronted women during the early middle ages. Nor am I convinced that the epistemological shifts that took place during the Renaissance and Enlightenment should be viewed as a form of colonization, although they certainly did undermine the cultural relevance of personal claims to spiritual revelation and, more generally, of mysticism as a path to culturally sanctioned truth.

Rather than being compelled to renounce all personal intellectual agency, secular women of the early Renaissance began to lay claim to what they viewed as their God-given right to exercise their intellectual powers based upon emerging Enlightenment commitments to the concepts of universal human equality, intellectual freedom, and reason. In 1405, Christine de Pizan penned a case for developing women’s moral and intellectual capacities, arguing that women’s natural capacities

were most likely to be equal to those of men, and only women's lack of education made it appear otherwise.

As Hendry chronicles, by the 17th century, married women such as the Duchess of Newcastle and others across Europe, including the "Blue Stockings" of France, England, and Germany, were publically arguing that women's inferior intellectual status owed wholly to the oppressive belief systems and cruelty of men. Margaret Fell, born in 1614, argued that all people can create knowledge by studying and thoughtfully reflecting upon their personal experience and that both men and women should therefore be called to participate actively in religious reflection and other cultural matters.

The 18th century saw an increasing diversity and sophistication among these arguments and an expansion of their reach. Against the backdrop of the Enlightenment enshrinement of reason and science that seems to trouble Hendry, Catherine Macaulay, born in 1731, argued that both genders need to work toward human wholeness by developing in both intellectual and moral terms, and Elizabeth Hamilton, born in 1758, theorized that true knowledge must be born of generative transactions between a person's body, heart, and mind.

While religious women had indeed lost a certain stature within the Catholic Church based upon what had been viewed as their closer relationship to the natural world, expanding literacy during the Renaissance and Enlightenment set the stage for an intellectual watershed for educated women. Although this literacy had been originally imagined in narrowly religious terms by the Reformation clerics who first translated the Bible into vernacular tongues, once large numbers of men and women learned to read and felt authorized to interpret God's word directly, conceptions of Christian love and knowledge multiplied.

Hendry explains that all this intellectual ferment eventually also prompted the Catholic Church to allow nuns to teach, to participate more actively in public affairs, and to assume greater responsibility for their own governance. Moving to the New World, Hendry shares the story of the Ursuline sisters in New Orleans alongside that of Puritan rebel Anne Hutchinson, leading her readers to the moment when they must ask themselves whether they are willing to view these idealistic New World activists, however compassionate they may have been toward native peoples and however committed they might have been to realizing their full intellectual capacities as women, as "decolonizing curriculum theorists" (p. 121).⁴

The implications of this matter move in several directions. Educated European women were empowered by Enlightenment emphases on cultural progress and reasoned argument as were both men and women of the emerging middle classes. That most—though not all—of the respected Enlightenment writers and scholars of both genders continued to construct gender in what Hendry calls binary terms⁵ should not be allowed to obscure the remarkable intellectual freedoms that this age conferred upon European men and women of a certain social standing. These freedoms contrast sharply with those granted to the indigenous peoples of North America. More generally, can the oppression of women by the men of their native culture, however

systematic and restrictive, be usefully likened to the wholesale suppression of a people's native ways of seeing and being and the imposition of foreign ways and means throughout that people's lands?

Unsettling Curriculum

A significant portion of Hendry's argument about the colonization of women's minds applies, as she acknowledges, to modernity's treatment of men's minds as well. Over time, the social and economic realities of industrialization led nation states to design and mandate various forms of schooling regimes. In the process of this massive social reorganization, the act of enculturating people did come to be conceptualized differently, nowhere more so than in the New World, where peoples from across the globe converged to build new lives. Modernity arguably altered the terms of the European nation state's founding social contract by setting bars for achieving the status of more or less acceptable citizen, and so placing some peoples' sense of cultural membership at risk.

Hendry speaks of education as regulation (p. 140), and while this construct can be seen to characterize modern schooling in general terms, the concept again feels particularly appropriate for characterizing the Americanization efforts she treats of the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries. As Hendry explains, by this point, the discourses of the emerging social sciences had been marshalled, not only in the service of disempowering educated women,⁶ but also to justify the sorting and labeling of culturally diverse peoples based upon the brutal and naïve prejudices of culturally elite Euro-Americans. Because educators of opposing aims and outlooks all sought to build a single, culturally coherent, and economically viable nation from a diverse range of peoples, Americanization efforts as conceived and enacted often worked at cross purposes and were generally inflected with, when they were not entirely driven by, such deeply troubling lines of thought.⁷

At the same time, Hendry notes that the social sciences provided the tools for Jane Addams' radical social critique and for "mov[ing] the settlement house movement beyond merely a charity or benevolence model of social aid" (p. 157). These contrasts and contradictions between the ways in which different educators of this period drew upon the human sciences make it all the more important for contemporary scholars to identify and explicate both the oppressive and liberatory aspects of anything we might want to call Progressivism—particularly when the Progressive educators Hendry treats represent in so commanding a manner all that today's liberatory minded educators are likely to consider most promising within that heritage. That Addams and Ida B. Wells have not always been taught alongside Dewey in foundation and philosophy of education courses feels like an egregious omission in the light of Hendry's fourth discourse.

In this regard, I have to take exception with Hendry's claim that student-centered education as understood within Progressivism did not require a teacher's active construction of knowledge. Certainly the many educators who identified with Progressivism in some manner during its heyday interpreted Dewey's well developed ideas on this topic in their various ways, yet curricular historians must take care not to conflate these many diverse interpretations. Dewey's conception of progressive pedagogical practice moves in the very direction as those of Adams and Wells, that

is, toward grounded and collaborative constructions of knowledge requiring the active intellectual participation of both student and teacher.

Along the same lines, Hendry notes that evolutionary theory provided the scientific basis for Progressive conceptualizations of human intelligence as malleable and of education as potentially able to foster new forms of individual and cultural growth. Although Hendry does not draw the connection, the ways in which Progressives employed these biological metaphors to position humanity as continuous with the natural world—and with a natural moral order—links back to the medieval conception discussed above of the human body as of a piece with God's creation. When speaking of the enduring implications of Darwinian thought and of Social Darwinism within the same few pages (pp. 137-8), one must disentangle with care the intellectual backdrop and import of such Darwinian lines of consideration from the very different lines of thought popularized by the Social Darwinists.⁸

One imagines that cultural regulation would be most readily taken up by those most deeply invested in existing social arrangements—at least among populations with the resources to reflect upon such matters. As women (and in Wells' case, an African-American), Addams and Wells were more likely than Dewey to devote themselves to reinscribing the notion of citizenship to include the dispossessed and less likely to pander in any manner to those who remained beguiled by abstract claims about human equality that were not seen as threatening inequitable arrangements on the ground. Yet Dewey aligned himself with the purposes of reformers such as Addams and Wells—even if he may not have always spoken as passionately or in as grounded a manner about the altered circumstances to which those shared purposes must lead.⁹

Experiencing Curriculum

Dewey's great contribution, on the other hand, was to develop Pragmatism, including its necessary realization in praxis, in an exhaustive, scholarly, and, for a university-based philosopher, enormously influential manner. Cornel West, who Hendry cites, has pointedly situated Dewey's unique contributions to Pragmatism within a greater liberatory framework and explicated the central relevance of those contributions for the North American liberatory tradition in particular (West, 1989).

Praxis entails meaningful transactions between the realms of theory and of sociopolitical action; such transactions, in turn, require developed visions of desired ends. When Dewey spoke of democratic educators' need for a new kind of social science, this is what he meant: Dewey believed that progressive educators needed to be able, not only to explain, but also to demonstrate the desired pedagogical outcomes to which their methods led (Dewey, 1928/88). It would not suffice for Progressive educators to theorize their methods in relation to defining democratic values; they also needed to be able to provide reliable evidence of the practical value of the pedagogical approaches they recommended.

The first female administrator of a large urban school district in this country, Ella Flagg Young—who was called a witch, but certainly not prosecuted as one—concurred with Dewey.¹⁰ Young believed in the value of advancing pedagogical claims based upon principled, transparent arguments and the results of one's ongoing pedagogical investigations within schools. As Hendry says, “[o]f particular concern to Young was reconceptualizing teaching as a site of experience to be reflected upon as well as the primary site in which reflection on experience was taught as the basis for democratic process” (p. 177).

Hendry says that the Pragmatic female practitioners she discusses actively addressed, “three areas central to pragmatist thought: experience as democracy, experimentation as scientific inquiry, and praxis as communal problem solving” (p.175). Hendry argues that the ground-breaking investigations of such women, undertaken in the classroom in the service of shared theoretical commitments, have gone largely unseen by historians such as Kliebard (1995), Ravitch (2000), and Krug (1964), whose narratives center instead on abstract policy debates occurring at the same time between male academics aligned with the social efficiency, child-centeredness, and social reconstruction movements (p. 172).

Although I would take exception to Hendry's claim that “the concepts of objectivity and validity” are not relevant to the kind of science Pragmatists do,¹¹ Hendry's larger point that the educational psychology we have inherited is not what either Dewey or these women had in mind certainly bears emphasis. It also bears further analysis and reflection. As Dewey would also argue, the concepts of experience and science, while related, each need to be clearly disentangled from the other and theorized. For whereas experience remains personally held and realized, scientific method looks toward what might be shared among the members of specified groups.

As West also emphasizes, pragmatism, rather than resting on established grounds, reaches for potential futures based upon shared visions of what those futures might promise. Although his 1989 text does not focus on any female pragmatists, West's analysis of the role that W. E. B. Du Bois, as an African-American scholar, played in expanding pragmatist theory to include the experiences of the dispossessed echoes some of the liberatory moves that the women Hendry discusses also undertook and points in directions that all liberatory minded souls might still move today.

Du Bois provides American pragmatism with what it sorely lacks: an international perspective on the impetus and impediments to individuality and radical democracy, a perspective that highlights the plight of the wretched of the earth ... James possessed the ingredients for such a view, but he did not see social structures, only individuals. Dewey indeed saw social structures and individuals, yet primarily through an American lens ... Du Bois goes beyond them all in the scope and depth of his vision: creative powers reside among the wretched of the earth even in their subjugation, and the fragile structures of democracy in the world depend, in large part, on how these powers are ultimately exercised (West, 1989, pp. 147-148).

Bitter Milk

A quarter century ago, Madeleine Grumet grappled with much of this more recent history and powerfully portrayed the intellectual and experiential realities to which this history has delivered woman educators of our time (1988). As a mother of three, a teacher, and eventually a doctoral student and scholar, Grumet spoke of the surreal theoretical lacunas between her personal and professional lives, worlds that felt so deeply and multifariously interconnected in her own experience.

As a scholar, Grumet was also able to uncover the kinds of gendered exclusions and suppressions that had resulted in so poor a store of conceptual resources for the many women who move daily between the press of the demands of other people's children and the press of the demands of their own. Reading Grumet's words, one senses that these exclusions and suppressions angered her. How can they fail to anger us today? For women to have been excluded from the professional deliberations of the scientists, the high priests, the mathematicians, all this has been regrettable enough, but to have had women's experiences of raising and teaching children go missing within 20th century models of educational research and theory?

Grumet spoke of her turn from the social sciences and toward the humanities in order "to recover specificity and contradiction, evidence that education was a human project that we all actively sustain" (Grumet, 1988, p. xv). Phenomenology and psychoanalytic theory provided guidance and the means for Grumet's reclamation of women's embodied subjectivities as the origin of their knowing and for her positioning of women's experience of birthing and nurturing children as germane to their experience of conceptualizing and enacting pedagogical relations.

Specifically, Grumet drew upon Nancy Chodorow (1978) to plumb the psychodynamics at work in the modern male's dismissal of women's experience as relevant to the construction of cultural understandings. Chodorow argues, in Grumet's words, that "the female child sustains the intuitive, emotional, and physical connectedness that the male represses" due to the male's need to separate psychically from his mother (Grumet, p. 13). Like an adolescent who must find at least one parent appalling in order to create the psychic space needed to construct an independent adult identity, Chodorow argues that very young boys must psychically distance themselves from their mothers in order to make it through the oedipal crisis successfully, and that this process can lead to enduring feelings of loss and vulnerability, particularly as the modern father remains relatively absent physically and emotionally.

To the extent that feelings of loss and vulnerability overwhelm boys during their oedipal struggles, boys are more likely to construct their intellectual identities in opposition to all their mothers represent. While many readers may share Chodorow's concern that the rites and rituals that traditionally supported boys as they separate from their mothers have been lost, Grumet's first chapter movingly portrays contradictory expressions of gender in our time, evoking the kind of transgressive possibilities that Hendry's text suggests others have also located and pursued during other eras.

[Chodorow's] story of palpable presence and shadowy absence, of turning to and turning away, is and is not my story. Over and over again it contradicts the intimacies of my own childhood. It obscures my mother's energy and activity in the public world just as it erases my father's attentiveness and care. He walked with me in the dark morning hours when I would not relinquish the world for sleep. She gave speeches and came home late after the meeting, her eyes glowing, showing me the beautiful pin that she had been given to recognize her achievement (Grumet, p. 14).

Considerable artistry is involved in the affecting dives Grumet makes into her personal experience in order to bring the theory she discusses into vibrant relation with the lived world. And while such artistry is not easily replicated across populations of scholars or of graduate students, Grumet nonetheless tells of requiring her students to attempt several such dives of their own so that they might learn to recognize and to grapple with elements of their own psychic landscapes, against which their thoughts and dreams about teaching have taken form.

Grumet also cited the research of Belenky et al (1986) on women's understandings of knowledge and of knowledge production. Belenky and her co-researchers Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule theorized that the understandings of the women they interviewed could be organized in five categories: *Silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge*. In her discussion of these categories, Grumet says, "[w]ithin their developmental argument, these authors make it clear that the constructivist position is an achievement, earned as women bring together the parts of their experience that the politics of gender, of family, school, and science, has separated. What I have called masculine epistemology may be found in their categories of received and procedural knowledge and the silence that their politics produces" (pp. 16-17).¹²

The constructivist position could also be seen as reflecting a "masculine epistemology" given that the two leading scholars associated with developmental learning theory and so constructivism, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, were both men. Neither man worked or studied in North America, though, so neither would have been touched by the frank misogyny (and reductionism) that organized North American educational research and theory throughout its founding decades.¹³ Indeed, contemporary constructivist theory generally comports with the contemporary understandings of other academic fields interested in matters of human learning and knowing.

Pragmatic philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, social anthropology and cognitive science, for example, all assume that people are driven to construct deeply held understandings about their social and material worlds over time based upon the relational and cultural resources available to them and the constraints, needs, and affordances of their embodied selves. That such processes result in species-general and culturally general congruencies regarding what people find they know only stands to reason; scientists are those who focus on articulating these more general dimensions of human experience in broadly acceptable terms. Yet as all dimensions of reality—social and material—turn out to be so much more complicated and interwoven than the grand theorists of modernity imagined, scientists must now learn to ground their theories ever more convincingly in the specifics of their circumstances and world views.

In their various ways, both Hendry and Grumet establish and sustain the dynamic tension between the general and the specific that contemporary social science requires (and that has always marked great art). We feel that tension, for example, as Hendry moves between the individual lives she portrays and the sociological conditions within which those lives unfolded, and as Grumet moves between psychoanalytic theory and tales of the personal experience that those theories are meant to inform.

Conclusion

Because Hendry is undertaking sorely needed work within the curriculum studies field, namely the reconceptualization of women as knowers and as educators throughout Western history, one can only hope that her text will find many readers willing and able to engage meaningfully with its provocations and challenges. The insights and arguments about knowledge and human experience offered by Hendry and the figures she presents in these pages need to find larger audiences still.

Reading Hendry's work against Grumet's, one senses the extent to which both scholars have been moved, as women, to create new ways of portraying and of apprehending the lived experience that has carried us all here. Both scholars place gender categories and experiences of gender in new angles of light, provoking disturbances within our established fields of understanding.

What do we—and shall we—imagine as similar, or complementary, or oppositional between male and female ways of understanding the world within our age and others? If women have traditionally represented all that grounds us to the natural world, if girls remain bound to and psychically buoyed by their mothers in ways unavailable to boys, if women, as an intellectually oppressed group, have learned to trust in and lean upon their grounded experiences of the world more wholly than men, what might any of this mean for liberatory social action in the 21st century?

In regards to the Enlightenment's bequests of liberal democracy and social science, as much as these constructs have been employed to legitimize and institutionalize white male privilege, they were always arguably too large and generous in conception to have ever been completely coopted to such ignoble ends. However narrowly conceived in their initial framings, the notions of human equality and intellectual freedom have provided cultural openings and conceptual resources that have inspired the women of the Western world and supported them in making their case for gender equality since the earliest days of the Renaissance as, again, the history Hendry recounts demonstrates. Our ideas about the possibilities and parameters of scientific exploration and democratic relations continue to morph and expand.

Current conceptions of knowledge among physicists and philosophers of science now hinge on context and assume contingency, yet only the most philosophically minded educational scholars have begun to imagine what this might mean for their research models. Perhaps the time is ripe, then, for classroom teachers and classroom-oriented scholars to insist more concertedly, based upon this culture's native Pragmatic tradition, on recognizing all disciplinary claims as situated

and value laden—as rooted within human need, intuition, and feeling as well as logic and math. Of course, the history Hendry has shared suggests that female intellectuals have been making related arguments ever since they have been allowed to say anything.

Endnotes

¹ While Hendry seeks to avoid idealizing a prehistoric time during which “a peaceful, blissful matriarchy in which there was equality between men and women” reigned she does not entirely succeed in avoiding related forms of generalizations, claiming, for example, “the interconnectedness of all living things ... shaped understandings of the world” and that “[t]he focus was on harmony, balance, and meaning-making that sought to ground one in the experience of Being” (p. 36).

² Hendry cites an edited text, *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Female Spirituality*, (Plaskow & Christ, 1989) in making this argument.

³ Hildegard of Bingen lived from 1098 to 1179, Hadewijch of Antwerp lived during the 13th century, and Teresa of Avila lived from 1515 to 1582.

⁴ Hendry does recognize that these women “clearly inhabit contradictory spaces in relation to their role as both colonized and colonizer,” nonetheless arguing that “they obviously disrupted the colonial gender norms that were central to the ideologies of domination and submission inherent in colonization” (ibid).

⁵ Though Hendry begins pairing binary with dualistic from time to time at this point, raising further questions about her use of these terms.

⁶ See also Lagemann, 2000.

⁷ Hendry draws on Annie Winfield’s work on psychometrics and eugenics (2007) in developing this dark dimension of “Americanization” efforts as conceived by those who either embraced or leaned toward Social Darwinian lines of thought.

⁸ Hendry misspeaks when she characterizes “[t]he Darwinian idea of evolution of the “perfect race” (p. 138). Darwin conceived of no such thing. I treat this need to distinguish precisely between Darwinian and Social Darwinian thought in a 2006 JAAACS review of Kieran Egan’s 2002 book on progressivism.

⁹ I have written elsewhere about the need to support people working toward liberatory purposes from diverse sociopolitical positions and outlooks (Mayer, in press).

¹⁰ See Hendry’s discussion of the push back to which Young’s elevation to superintendent of Chicago schools and her Progressive and Pragmatic commitments led (pp. 170-1). Hendry cites Blount (1998) who claims that Young’s opponents referenced sexologists of the time in order to “link spinsterhood with lesbianism.”

¹¹ Although Pragmatists eschew claims of certainty and universality, objective observation and valid inference remain priorities within specified circumstances and in relation to *specified* values and aims. See, for example, Catherine Elgin on objectivity within Pragmatism (1996).

¹² Western psychology traces the origins of constructivist thought to developmental researcher Jean Piaget, the brilliant Genevan patriarch who drew actively upon the observations and insights of the many female researchers and educators who peopled his research teams. See Mayer, 2005, on the development of Piaget’s research methodology for discussion of the cultural context within which Piaget and his many female collaborators undertook nearly six decades of developmental research.

¹³ In contrast, the Russian (and briefly Soviet) Vygotsky drew upon his background in philosophy and literature in his explorations of the role of language in human knowledge production and reproduction, and Piaget integrated his experience with psychoanalytic diagnosis into an original methodology that many American child psychologists continue to find imprecise on their terms. On Piagetian method, again see Mayer, 2005. On the frank misogyny of early American educational theorists, again, see Lagemann, 2000.

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