

Valuing Difference: Luce Irigaray and Feminist Pedagogy

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Thereby woman, whose intervention in the work of engendering the child can hardly be questioned, becomes the anonymous worker, the machine in the service of a master-proprietor who will put his trademark upon the finished product.¹

The anonymous worker—the mother, the teacher—the anonymous woman. Woman defined by her fixed place in the system of reproduction. How has this come to be? How has woman become—how does she remain—an anonymous instrument in the reproduction of patriarchy? How does social reproduction relate to the position of woman as mother—as the “vehicle” of physical reproduction? In this paper, I tie questions such as these to the discipline of education, and to women’s role in the underlying ideologies of our educational system. In order to do so I will approach these questions from three distinct vantage points: a) Irigaray’s critique of psychoanalytic theories of reproduction, b) theories of social reproduction in schooling, and c) feminist pedagogy.

¹Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. C. Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 23.

The first will consist of an exploration of theories of reproduction from psychoanalysis as they have been critiqued by the French feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray. As Irigaray’s analysis has made clear, much of the positioning of women in psychoanalytic theory has been based on the sexual division of labor and the role that anatomy and the nature of physical reproduction have played in determining the position of woman. Therefore, I begin by presenting some alternate readings of this positioning and begin to make connections about the means through which woman’s physical role in the bearing and raising of children has been translated into her role in education, both as student and as teacher.

The next section describes what is commonly termed social reproduction in schooling. Schools, like other social structures, slot women into positions of subordination and complicity. In this section I discuss the applicability of social reproduction for education and the use of these theories of reproduction in defining gender roles.

In the final section—the most difficult to write—I attempt to build upon the work of Irigaray, both stylistically and intellectually in the form of an extension of her critiques—and examine the underlying assumptions and ideology of education. Using Irigaray’s conception of the female imaginary, this ideology will be confronted and, it is my hope, subverted. Through an open-ended questioning of what are commonly considered to be the aims of education, I present contradictions that I think are inherent in our system of education. These contradictions are based on exclusionary practices, including exclusion on the basis of gender. Concepts and ideas from French feminism force us to reconsider education in light of a gender specific critique. When these perspectives are adopted I find that the ideas of reproduction from psychoanalysis and educational theories about social reproduction are based on the same model of the sexual division of labor, a model which no longer holds given the strength of Irigaray’s critique. Within this questioning a space for woman’s subjectivity is opened, a subjectivity that proves ultimately subversive within our current educational ideologies.

Reproduction and the Ideology of the Maternal

According to feminist theorist Nancy Chodorow, "being a mother . . . is not only bearing a child—it is being a person who socializes and nurtures."² She goes on to write:

Women's mothering is central to the sexual division of labor. Women's maternal role has profound effects on women's lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction.³

Chodorow positions women as "pivotal actors." But what role have women been assigned to play? In what ways do women act? How does the maternal role extend beyond traditional definitions of mothering? How are mothering and the reproduction of patriarchy connected? Could mothering be refigured in such a way that the function of reproduction is not the reproduction of traditional masculine imaginary and of patriarchy? And, more particularly, how is an ideology of the maternal connected to schooling? Does the reproduction of knowledge depend on an economy of the same, an economy of exchange relations in which sameness rather than difference is valued?⁴ Is social reproduction in the schools also based on an economy that reproduces the father through the son?

²Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978), 11.

³Ibid.

⁴In this case, the word economy is used to convey the idea that patriarchy is based on exchange mechanisms. Within patriarchy women are objects of exchange whose value is based upon their reproductive functions. For an excellent historical examination of this system, see Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Imbedded in questions such as these are the same issues that Irigaray raises in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, specifically in her essay "The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry." Although Irigaray is not writing of the links between schooling and reproduction, these connections are exposed by her critique.

Matrix—womb, earth, factory, bank—to which the seed capital is entrusted so that it may germinate, produce, grow fruitful, without woman being able to lay claim to either capital or interest since she has submitted "passively" to reproduction. Herself held in receivership as a certified means of (re)production.⁵

To Irigaray's list of "womb, earth, factory, bank" I would add *school*—to my mind one of the foremost traditional institutions that is a container of seed capital—an institution in which women *act passively* as the means of reproduction. This notion of "acting passively" is taken from Irigaray—who quotes from Freud—who writes that we "might consider characterizing femininity psychologically as giving preference to *passive aims*. This is not, of course, the same thing as passivity; to achieve passive aims may call for a large amount of activity."⁶ This "activity" on the part of woman is "acceptable," or within acceptable limits, since it is not disruptive. It does not interfere with reproduction—either physical, psychological or social—indeed, I believe that this passive activity is essential for patriarchal reproduction. Woman's passive activity enables and recreates patriarchy without challenging its social legitimacy. Further, it is only in this sense that woman is *allowed* to perform. Within patriarchy, space has been created to give woman certain functions, such as mothering. As long as she remains within the scope of these roles, her activity is tolerated and essential to the maintenance of patriarchy. This should not suggest that the women who live within these roles are by definition either unhappy or complicit. These functions are necessary for the continuation of patriarchy and are therefore rewarded by the patriarchal system. Further, these passive activities serve to

⁵Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 18.

⁶Ibid.

interrupt woman's attempts at disruption; the woman who attempts to step outside the role she is allowed to perform is seen as unwomanly and as a threat. There is no position within the institutional process of schooling in which she can actively act, that is, as actors who create systems of meaning. Women's actions are restricted by patriarchal definition, confined to passive actions that support uncritically, and would never in the least subvert patriarchy. This understanding recasts Chodorow's comments concerning women as pivotal actors: women are indeed actors in the reproduction of patriarchy, but rather than being primary or pivotal characters they are instead supporting members of the cast acting out a script that leaves them little room for subjectivity and self-determination.

As Irigaray further points out, women are not even allowed to take an active role in the process of reproduction—such activity is not feminine.

But representing *herself* "as" mother, the game of maternity and mothering, is not an expression of femininity in Freud's opinion. To pretend, to act out, a relationship with the mother, with the maternal function, in Freud's opinion, is not feminine. . . . *No fiction, no mimetic game, is allowed the little girl if it involves herself or her relationship to (re)production. Such games are "phallic."*⁷

Irigaray clearly exposes the underlying assumption that woman can only be a passive actor in reproduction. She further points to the fact that this reproduction is not the reproduction of woman—not even if defined as the maternal. Woman, within this psychoanalytic framework, can only be assigned a part within the play by patriarchy. It is the needs and demands of her father—of patriarchy—that determine woman's function. He is the author and the director. Woman is necessary for reproduction; however it is only the reproduction of the same, the son, that is the subject matter of this play. Patriarchy is dependent on "a

⁷Ibid., 77-78.

reproduction of the *same* that defies death, in the procreation of the *son*, this same of the procreating father."⁸ Examples of this can be found in situations as common as the passing on of the father's name through the male child, women taking their husband's name upon marriage, and, until recently, the position of women with regard to property laws and inheritance. Under patriarchy, women are first the property of their fathers, then of their husbands.

Presently, woman is confined to the maternal, but this maternal is defined in such a way as to be limiting rather than empowering. The range of the maternal function is severely limited by the needs and constraints of patriarchy. Elizabeth Grosz writes that this

. . . restriction of women to a phallogcentrically constrained maternity is crippling for both mother and daughter. For the mother, it implies the severe limitation on her possibilities of self-definition and autonomy, her subjection to the Law of the Father, her subsumption under the patronym, her renunciation of an identity as a woman and a sexual being. . . she must remain unacknowledged, confined to a predesignated reproductive function.⁹

Grosz points to the limits that this understanding of the maternal places upon woman. Her confinement—a term which unwittingly reveals the patriarchal view of giving birth—extends endlessly beyond the period in which she is actually giving birth. She is forever placed within the phallogcentric definition of the maternal. Woman has no control over what the maternal represents.

⁸Ibid., 27.

⁹Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 121.

The primary role assigned to woman by the Law of the Father is to function as a mother. If woman were to choose this as her role, she would present a dangerous challenge to the law.¹⁰ Any active choice is forbidden, again she can only act passively. The normal woman—the feminine woman—can have no access to phallic power.

This view differs from the explanation given by Chodorow who suggests that “women’s mothering, then, produces psychological self-definition and capacities appropriate to mothering in women, and curtails and inhibits these capacities and this self-definition in men.”¹¹ Chodorow goes on to write that “this set of expectations [about mothering] is generalized to the assumption that women naturally take care of children of all ages and the belief that women’s ‘maternal’ qualities can and should be extended to the non-mothering work they do.”¹² Chodorow’s analysis is missing Irigaray’s understanding that it is not woman’s *self-definition* that creates “capacities appropriate to mothering in women,” but that these capacities are determined by a patriarchal system. The self-definition that Chodorow writes about can be more accurately described as the illusion of self-definition.¹³

¹⁰ Examples of this can be found in situations such as women who choose single motherhood; an act that is portrayed as profoundly dangerous to notions such as “family values” and, by implication, the continuation of patriarchy.

¹¹ Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, 208.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ This parallels the Marxist idea of false consciousness and points clearly to the reason why consciousness raising groups have been, and remain, such an important part of the evolution of a feminist consciousness.

With Irigaray we can ask:

As for woman, one may wonder why she submits so readily to this make-believe, why she “mimics” so perfectly as to forget she is acting out man’s contraphobic projects, projections, and productions of her desire.¹⁴

This is indeed a crucial question—why does woman seemingly forget that she is acting out someone else’s script? How can the illusion be so complete that she no longer sees it, even when the illusion is exposed to her? Perhaps it is because, as Gallop would claim,

the dream is everyone’s inasmuch as everyone is within ‘the metaphysical closure’, inasmuch as any reader is a ‘subject’, which is to say has been philosophically reduced to a unified, stable, sexually indifferent subject, trapped in the old dream of symmetry.¹⁵

Have we learned to ignore our sexual difference, to be sexually indifferent? This difference is the basis of patriarchal constructions of metaphysics. As Margaret Whitford explains,

these differences are . . . positions . . . One of the two poles is always privileged over the other, the intelligible over the sensible, for example, or man over woman. The main point is that metaphysics is based upon a process of exclusion and hierarchies.¹⁶

¹⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 53.

¹⁵ Jane Gallop, *The Daughter’s Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 57.

¹⁶ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), 126.

For women the implications of this are dire. In order to have access to metaphysical systems of thought, the intelligible, women must attempt to escape the positions of difference that position her as the lower term in the hierarchy of man and woman. This calls for her to forget her sexual difference, in effect asking her to pretend to be "one of the boys." Is this the price that has been exacted from us in exchange for the illusion of subjectivity and self-determination? For women within a patriarchal structure subjectivity can never be more than an illusion. As Whitford states,

In this [patriarchal] structure, to be a subject is to take up the male position . . . to identify with the Father (the Law), and thus, for women, to find themselves in conflict, potentially at odds with their mother, other women, and their self, for lack of an identifiatory support . . . that would confirm them as female subjects.¹⁷

There is, at present, no position of subjectivity for women, nor will there be as long as difference is thought of as a means of exclusion. Instead of accepting this we need to ask ourselves how we can re-dream the dream of symmetry—a different difference dream—in which difference is valued and does not serve as a device of exclusion.

In parallel, just as woman's definition as mother is controlled by patriarchy, the very conception of what it is to be maternal—to mother—is defined by patriarchy. Acceptable ways of mothering are determined by the relationship to the (male) child.¹⁸ In seeking understandings of "good" mothering, there is

¹⁷ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸ For example, see Susan Faludi's discussion of vival, in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), and Kathleen Weiler, "Feminist Analyses of Gender and Schooling," chap. in *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class & Power* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1988).

no consideration of the impact of the maternal on woman. Good mothering is determined by the outcome, that is, as it is evidenced through the results produced in and by the son.

How then does this conception of motherhood shape our social institutions, particularly schooling? How does the role of woman in these institutions mimic that of women in reproduction? These questions build upon those of Irigaray, approaching the social reproduction that occurs within the schools and the roles that woman, both as teacher and student, plays in this reproduction.

Madeleine Grumet points out that the American school and the family are parallel patriarchal structures.¹⁹ Women, especially in elementary schools, are responsible for the nurturing and daily care of children. In this task they are typically supervised and controlled by men. Women in this situation can participate in one of two roles. They can either submit to this patriarchal rule and be good mothers/teachers, or they can deny their femininity and act as men without challenging patriarchal structures of administrative authority.

In a "blind dream of symmetry" woman functions as man's other. Symmetry, in this context, performs the task of structuring our systems of thought so that difference is eradicated rather than valued. In this sense, woman reproduces man and mirrors him back to himself. As Silverman discusses, "Irigaray painstakingly and compellingly demonstrates that the economy of the phallus is predicated upon the demand for symmetry."²⁰ Within this structure of symmetry woman exists as a smooth mirror, only able to reflect patriarchal structures. The means through which symmetry functions in the maternal should be clear; what should also be clear is the parallel way in which

¹⁹ Madeleine Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 85.

²⁰ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 142.

symmetry operates in schooling. In the old dream of symmetry "the woman/student/reader ends up functioning as mirror, giving back a coherent, framed representation to the appropriately masculine subject."²¹ Within this construction, woman does not have the power to change patriarchy, she functions only to reproduce its representations. Gallop's list of woman/student/reader could be expanded to include teacher, for, as a teacher, woman "acts" as the conveyer of patriarchy.²²

In close relation to the maternal, woman as teacher is often judged by the achievements of her (male) students. Just as a mother's success is frequently judged by her children (there are no bad children, only bad mothers), the success—or lack thereof—of a female teacher is dependent upon the success of her students. Have her students learned what they were supposed to learn? Have they learned the knowledge contained in the curriculum—a set of knowledge determined by and large by men? Above all, her abilities as a teacher are called into question if she breaks the discipline of patriarchy. Order—of knowledge and of patriarchy—must be maintained.²³

²¹Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 66.

²²Of course, male teachers are also conveyors of patriarchy for they are assured of their continued position by doing so. It should also be noted that this passing on of patriarchy is not necessarily at the conscious level—nor is it any less oppressive for being so.

²³For more elaborate discussions of this see Madeleine Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, especially chapters 2 and 5; Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, "Women in the Academy: Strategy, Struggle, Survival," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); and Kathleen Weiler, "Feminist Analyses of Gender and Schooling," chap. in *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class & Power* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1988).

As student, woman is rewarded for keeping within the patriarchal order—for repeating, without change or question, the knowledge that has been deemed worthy. Hers is not the place to create or question knowledge.

In order to challenge this oppressive tradition, woman must reclaim the maternal—in the sense that the maternal can be subversive and can undermine the existence of a patriarchal system that is predicated on the elimination of difference. In this way a gender specific understanding of education can come about—and woman can exist as mother/teacher/student without having to be either the "little man" or "a man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman."²⁴ Woman as subject—not necessarily the same subject as man, but nonetheless as subject—could exist. Exist is must. Lives—if not life—are at stake.

Social Reproduction and Education

In this section I will explore the way that reproduction has generally been explained by educational theorists. This is related to the discussion in the previous section but, as I think will become clear, these theories of reproduction have tended to ignore the way that gender functions in social reproduction in education.

The subject of social reproduction through schooling has been explored by a number of educational theorists. In his text, *Ain't No Making It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, Jay MacLeod distinguishes between two types of social reproduction theory.²⁵ The first depends on mechanistic models of reproduction while the second relies on a "culturally attuned" model that responds to shifting cultural conditions. Of the first MacLeod writes that these theorists

²⁴Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 27.

²⁵Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Making It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987).

take as their starting point the structural requirements of the capitalist economic system and attempt to demonstrate how individuals are obliged to fulfill predefined roles that ensure the successful accumulation of capital and the perpetuation of a class society.²⁶

For example, as MacLeod describes it, the work of social reproduction theorists Bowles and Gintis uses the model of the capitalist economic system.²⁷ In their work they hypothesize a rigid structural correspondence between educational and economic systems. Specifically they point to the organization of power and authority in the school and the workplace, the student's lack of control over curriculum as compared to the worker's lack of control over her/his job, and the role of grades and other rewards compared to the role of wages (both of these being external motivational systems).²⁸

Bowles and Gintis also argue that class is reproduced by differences in various schools in the enforcement of these rules of behavior. Schools serving the working class are more regimented emphasizing behavioral control. Further, they argue that even within single schools, devices such as student tracking serve to distinguish between classes and ultimately function as a means of class control and social reproduction.

As MacLeod discusses, the work of Bowles and Gintis has been heavily criticized, most notably for the simplicity of their theory and the homogeneous ways in which different classes are treated. In this respect their model is seen as being too crudely mechanistic, allowing for no resistance on the part of individuals.

Another example of a mechanistic model of reproduction is that put forth by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu is most well-known for the concept of cultural capital. This is defined as general cultural background, knowledge disposition, and skills that are

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

passed on from one generation to the next. Bourdieu argues that children of different classes inherit substantially different cultural capital, essential to maintaining class divisions and structures.

There are four main points to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital: a) that there is a distinctive cultural capital transmitted by each social class, b) that schools valorize upper-class capital and depreciate the cultural capital held by the lower classes, c) that differential academic achievement (largely determined by access to upper-class cultural capital) is retranslated back into economic wealth, and d) that schools legitimize this process by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies.²⁹ Bourdieu also uses the concept of habitus which refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of those people who make up any given person's social world, affecting her/his attitudes towards schooling and aspirations, and allowing social structures to succeed in reproducing themselves. For Bourdieu, there is no escaping this structural and institutional order. As MacLeod makes clear, there is no room in Bourdieu's theory for any form of opposition, challenge, delegitimation, diversity, or nonconformity and "the mechanisms of cultural and social reproduction remain hidden because the social practices that safeguard the economic and political interests of the dominant classes go unrecognized; instead they are considered the only natural, rational, or possible ones."³⁰

In contrast to this mechanistic view there are those theorists who view social reproduction as a system which "allows for the relative autonomy of individuals in their own cultural settings . . . Culturally attuned models begin with the experiences of individuals."³¹ Henry Giroux would be an example of this type of theorist. Giroux tries to bridge the gap between agency and structure. He proposes a dialectical treatment of structure and subjectivity in which structure and human agency are seen to mutually affect each other. From this position Giroux develops a theory of resistance, exemplified in his theories of critical

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

pedagogy. Giroux looks for instances of students' nonconformity and oppositional strategies in terms of their sociopolitical significance.

There are notable problems with Giroux's theory of a pedagogy of resistance toward transformation. However, in this section I limit my exploration to the fact that each of these theorists (Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, and Giroux) discuss social reproduction and the role of schooling in this process in more or less gender neutral ways.

In marked contrast to this, Irigaray calls for the need for a dialectic examination of the connections between economic class and patriarchy. She writes:

It seems, in this connection, that the relation between the system of economic oppression among social classes and the system that has been labeled patriarchal has been subjected to very little dialectical analysis, and has once again been reduced to a hierarchical structure.³²

This subsumption of gender within class conditions and analyses is precisely what educational theorists of social reproduction have done. Irigaray's critique points to the impossibility of separating or prioritizing frameworks of oppression, revealing instead the connections between our social, political, and economic systems.

Also left undiscussed in theories of social reproduction is the role of women in education. According to Grumet, 87% of elementary school teachers in the U.S. are women.³³ Until the mid-1800s few women were allowed to teach school. When school boards did begin to hire women it was largely because they could be paid substantially less than male teachers, earning some 60% less.³⁴ Although there was an obvious economic reason

³² Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 82.

³³ Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, 44.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

behind this decision, the prevailing rhetoric framed the situation rather differently. Women were presented as ideal elementary school teachers since they could provide the qualities of nurturing and caring, qualities that were thought to be innate in women. As elementary teachers women had in effect become surrogate mothers.³⁵

Inherent in this position is the contradiction that these teachers, as women, were mothers and, simultaneously, the enforcers of patriarchal law. Women in this situation are truly Irigaray's anonymous workers. They become the conveyers of the Law of the Father and physically split the mother-child dyad. Yet, at the same time, these teachers, as women, have themselves no access or recourse to the law. In this sense, women as teachers are instruments in social reproduction through schooling. They have no central or active role and do not have the power to affect the most fundamental outcomes of education in any real way. Positions of administration and decision making have typically been held by men and denied to women.

In this sense, mothering and teaching are for all intents and purposes synonymous. Within a patriarchal model, mothering becomes the public duty that enables social reproduction. Women in both of these situations are only reproducing men; women are the mirror that reflects the reproduction of the same, of patriarchy.³⁶ Woman has not chosen the maternal, in either the home or the classroom. Instead this role is assigned and defined by men.

³⁵ It is my experience that this belief still holds true today. In discussing this with prospective elementary school teachers (a group composed predominantly of women), I have found that most of them believe that women become better elementary school teachers because they are better with children and can provide a more caring environment.

³⁶ Within this structure women are reproduced as reproducers but not as subjects.

We need to begin to open a space for women to reclaim and define these positions. In this space, the possibility of women's subjectivity could begin to exist. Due to the fact that gender does not inform traditional psychoanalysis or educational theories of social reproduction, these theories do not allow the possibility of women's subjectivity. Therefore, in the final section of this paper, I use the lens of gender to explore the ideologies underlying much educational theory and practice. It is my hope that this might create a pedagogy that develops a space for women's subjectivity in education.

Towards a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference

"Questions—among others—that question themselves and answer each other throughout . . ." ³⁷ The imaginary, a term that comes from Lacan's reading of Freud, refers to that moment in psychosexual development when a child sees himself in the mirror and recognizes that he is different from his mother. ³⁸ This moment is a crucial step towards subjectivity, a process that is completed when the child has access to the symbolic in the form of written language. In Lacanian thought this male imaginary, when combined with the symbolic and the real, forms the structural basis for subjectivity.

Instead of this Irigaray posits the existence of a female imaginary. By turning Lacan's flat mirror into a speculum or curved mirror, Irigaray shatters this image of the development of subjectivity and begins to create a space for women to have access to subjectivity. Why does the female imaginary use questions? How do questions shape our inquiry? How might the female imaginary use questions to formulate the use of language? Within the female imaginary, the use of questions—especially, as Irigaray suggests, those that question themselves—does not allow us to position answers as singular and definitive. For

³⁷ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 119.

³⁸ One of the problems with this formulation is the fact that it is predicated upon the male child's development.

Irigaray these multiple answers are what a symbolic shaped by the female imaginary might lead to.

In trying to establish connections between Irigaray's reading of theories of reproduction from psychoanalysis and my reading of educational theorists' ideas about social and cultural reproduction in education, I turn to ideas from Irigaray about the female imaginary. She offers us new ways to conceptualize language and thereby redefine the symbolic order. A redefinition of the symbolic is important for this would move us towards a position where women can speak as subjects. Whitford describes this move as being from "speaking (as) woman in patriarchal culture, in which that voice is not heard or listened to, and speaking (as) woman in a different symbolic order." ³⁹ By using questions I seek to establish connections between social and psychoanalytic reproduction theories toward finding ways to reconceptualize educational practice—pedagogy, curriculum, classroom dynamics—and create a space in the symbolic order as represented by educational theory and practice for women's subjectivity.

If education, as it now exists, represents a mirror that reproduces the patriarchal ideal of the self, what would education look like if it were a speculum—a curved mirror? What would it mean to teach instead from this position?

Jane Gallop tells us that "Irigaray is not interested in the answer. She pursues a ceaseless questioning which has not time and is not foolish enough to wait for an answer." ⁴⁰ This questioning without necessarily answering, an approach that I have tried to adopt, does not suggest that the answer is not important, but that a preoccupation with answers can keep us trapped within the questions of patriarchy. In what ways might our teaching strategies be described as foolish? Do we strive too much to find the answer—that is too often also the position of power? The master teacher passes on knowledge. We never

³⁹ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, 42.

⁴⁰ Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 62.

realize that "there is no law and no mastery . . . there is no master," writes Cixous. She goes on to state, "the paradox of mastery is that it is made up of a sort of complex ideological secretion produced by an infinite quantity of doorkeepers."⁴¹ Do we position teachers to become doorkeepers, keepers of the knowledge, keeping out those who do not know?

How does education function?

What are the aims of education?

While not presenting the following as an exhaustive list, I believe the following to be among the more prevalent current aims of education.

the educational aim of maintaining patriarchy,

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

Freud asks us, "what do women want?"

Unanswerable question. Is this made so because there is no room for woman's wants in patriarchy? Patriarchy depends on woman as object, as object of exchange in a male economy driven by exchange. Why doesn't your knowledge tell me who I am? Can you hear my voice?

Woman-as-subject challenges the patriarchal order. She disrupts a system that is dependent on reproduction without change. We can begin to teach in ways that value difference rather than measuring sameness. Do all our students need to leave the classroom with the same knowledge?

⁴¹ Hélène Cixous in "Exchange," in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 138.

the educational aim of perpetuating hierarchies of knowledge,

"There has always been a split between those who are in possession of knowledge and culture and who occupy a position of mastery and others. . . . And I am not saying that women are never on the side of knowledge-power. But in the majority of cases in their history one finds them aligned with no-knowledge or knowledge without power."⁴² Women's history is comprised of countless examples of excluded knowledge. Women's knowledge and women's work, relegated largely to the sphere of the domestic, is in large measure valueless and invisible in patriarchy.

History, women's history, black women's history, . . . history. "History, history of phallogentrism, history of appropriation: a single history. History of an identity: that of man's becoming recognized by the other (son or woman) reminding him that, as Hegel says, death is his master."⁴³ The death drives creating the search for truth and replication so that he might exist beyond death. Becoming immortal through the creation and categorization of knowledge. Every qualifier that we add to terms such as history removes women from the "core" of knowledge. The "core" curriculum misses those on the margins. Women and their experiences have been marginalized in the curriculum, placed on the margins by the various terms through which our knowledge is referred. We are fodder for your canon. Instead of being objects that are added to the canon to demonstrate its inclusiveness, a call for a new subjectivity requires us as teachers to reject ideas of core curricula and hierarchies of knowledge. We need to include what is now marginalized and excluded from our teachings.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴³ Hélène Cixous, "Sorties," in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 79.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

excluding,

The exclusion of people controls access to knowledge and thereby limits access to power, to change, to self determination. . . . Exclusion is not just of people but of experiences, histories, traditions, rituals. . . . Can I "make it" without linearity in my thinking? Can I "make it" without becoming you? The ideology of exclusion subsumes you in who you must become at the risk of who you are in order to "succeed." Where am I? I am a woman, I am outside, I am other. "And does not this logic, which is beginning in a certain way to exhaust itself, find reserves for itself in the unconscious as in any form of 'otherness': savages, children, the insane, women?"⁴⁴ Not one outsider, not one other but many others. If I am not you I am excluded. Where is my community? Is there more than just me here?

"You? I? That's still saying too much. Dividing too sharply between us: all."⁴⁵

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

universalizing,

"Patriarchy does not prevent women from speaking; it refuses to listen when women do not speak 'universal', that is, as men."⁴⁶ How do I speak? Postmodernism provides us with the

⁴⁴Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 124.

⁴⁵Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 218.

⁴⁶Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, 126.

illusion of inclusiveness, the illusion of decentering authority, and the false promise of dismantling patriarchy. However, Irigaray is distrustful of these illusions for within postmodern theory the same structures of knowledge are still in place. Postmodernism is, at best, perhaps the slightly rebellious son. The father, modernism, still frames the questions to which postmodernism responds. Paternalism prevails. Whitford points to the danger of decentering, or moving away from, the idea of the subject since this seems to be occurring at the precise moment that women (and other others) are approaching subjectivity.⁴⁷ "I know that some men imagine that the great day of the good-for-everyone universal has dawned. But what universal? What new imperialism is hiding behind this? And who pays the price for it?"⁴⁸ The illusion of greater inclusiveness maintains the hierarchical structures of power. Father to son you still speak and reproduce others according to plan. We must ask more—accepting no less than to "subvert the functioning of dominant representations and knowledges in their singular, universal claims to truth."⁴⁹ Add women and stir—it is not enough. We need to redefine the methodologies of inquiry that are used, and rethink the questions that are asked, not just the answers that are given. Subvert. . .

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

communicating a fixed truth,

Truth. Can the truth be spoken? Can the truth for women be spoken? Is there a truth for women?

⁴⁷Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, London & New York: Routledge, 1991, 30.

⁴⁸Luce Irigaray, "How to Define Sexuate Rights?" trans. David Macey, in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 205.

The pedagogical relation expects her [Irigaray] as 'authority' to have a 'truth', a 'theory' which would allow her to 'simply' answer. She would then 'answer for woman', speak for her not as her. Woman would be the subject matter, the material of her discourse. She would trade woman, just as women have always been 'merchandise' in a commerce between men. Woman is passed from the hands of the father to the hands of the husband, from the pimp to the john, from the professor to the student who asks questions about the riddle of femininity.⁵⁰

Can we learn to teach without relying on fixed truths, without speaking for others? Can our teaching include multiple truths and multiple realities without being doomed by the meaningless pluralism of postmodernism? Not one woman but many—Not one experience but many—Not one truth but many. . . .

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

promoting "equal opportunity,"

How much is your cultural capital worth? "Children of upper class origin, according to Bourdieu, inherit substantially different cultural capital than do working class children."⁵¹ To be measurable you must be the same. I am not. Your mirror only serves to reflect your own image back to you. You into your own likeness. My speculum reflects a multitude. We cannot rely on the false promise of giving our students equal opportunities when they enter our classes already in a position of inequality.

⁴⁹ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, 127.

⁵⁰ Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 63.

⁵¹ MacLeod, *Ain't No Making It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, 12.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

encouraging a belief in inquiry based on scientific method and rationality,

Where is my reality? My truth? Why does knowledge have to replicate itself to be true? Must truth be based on rationality? "And if for him the law guarantees an increment of pleasure, and power, it would be good to uncover what this implies about his desire—he seems to get more sexual satisfaction from making laws than love. . . ."⁵² Scientific method depends on proving the hypothesis and creating laws. "Irigaray's uncertain, indeterminate attempt to respond to questions without giving definitive answers thus attempts really to engage the questions, to dialogue with something *hetero* (other) rather than being trapped in the *homo* (same)."⁵³ How different from the replicative quest of the scientific method.

Is there another side? "For Irigaray, women's autonomy implies women's right to speak, and listen, *as women*."⁵⁴ There is more than just the phallus. "The phallus is singular (simple), represents a unified self, as opposed to the indefinite plurality of female genitalia (clitoris, vagina, lips—how many?, cervix, breasts—Irigaray is fond of making the list, which never has quite the same elements, never is simply finished)."⁵⁵ Not finished because we do not have the answers. The nature of the list lies in its plurality. It escapes definition, for how can you replicate indefinite plurality? We must work with our students to encourage them to think in terms of multiple answers rather than searching for definitive truths.

⁵² Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 38-39.

⁵³ Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 65.

⁵⁴ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, 127.

⁵⁵ Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 63.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

providing teachers who are masters of knowledge,

"Only those people who already have a relationship of mastery, who already have dealings with culture, who are saturated with culture, have ever dared to have access to the discourse that the masters give."⁵⁶ What language are you speaking? Can you hear me? I am not the passive recipient of your knowledge nor will I be complicit in its reproduction. Do you think I'm a vessel into which you can transfer your goods—your seed capital? Your classrooms are models of linearity—there I cannot learn. Freire reminds us that "in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry."⁵⁷ Do you presume that I know nothing? Does my knowledge count for nothing in your bank of education? Must you constantly undermine my knowledge to maintain your mastery?

The implications of this are not restricted to the communication of knowledge but also carry with it pedagogical strategies. "[T]here is the difference between lecture and seminar, the seminar supposedly implying a plurality of contribution, whereas the lecture divides into speaker presumed to have knowledge and listeners presumed to learn—to be lacking in knowledge."⁵⁸ We are both responsible for our knowledge. You no longer have the answers—together we must learn.

⁵⁶ Cixous, "Exchange," 139.

⁵⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 58.

⁵⁸ Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, 65.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

preparing students,

Prepare students: for what? Do all students receive the same preparation? For the same purpose? "Becoming the *mother of the son*, the woman will be able to 'transfer to her son all the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself'."⁵⁹ Are our teachers our mothers? The confusion of care and nurturing. If I care, if I nurture, am I your essential mother? Can I teach without caring? Without nurturing? Do I need to be the same as the son, he who is the same as the father? What types of reproduction are rewarded? Are my students valued only if they reproduce positions deemed important within a patriarchal ideology? Does women's reproduction have equal value—or is only the reproduction of the father/the son/the same worthy? Can a system of reproduction based on difference rather than sameness have value?

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

reproducing the status quo in culture and society, and

This reproduction relies upon an economy of the self-same, an economy based on the death drive and the need for repetition, "a reproduction of the *same* that defies death, in the procreation of the *son*, this same of the procreating father. As testimony, for self and others, of his imperishable character, and warranty of a new generation of self-identity for the male seed."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 42.

⁶⁰ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 27.

"[T]he rejection of rigid dichotomous characterizations of the two sexes, and the corresponding oppositions between subject and object, self and other, inside and outside, active and passive She [Irigaray] explores an undecidable fusion with and differentiation from the mother which defies patriarchal logic."⁶¹ The alternatives to dichotomization are based in female multiplicity and in a redefinition of the mother-daughter relationship. In this, the mother-daughter relationship becomes one who can be described as subject-to-subject, rather than women taking a position as passive object of reproduction.

In our teaching we can strive to move away from systems of binary opposition and hierarchy where terms become structured in opposition to each other. If we do not do this then attempts in our classrooms to value difference will only produce a more severe dichotomization and, for those students who are marginalized by our system of education, serve to further their marginalization.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman?

maintaining the Law of the Father,

"For the patriarchal order is indeed the one that functions as the organization and monopolization of private property to the benefit of the head of the family. It is his proper name, the name of the father, that determines ownership for the family including the wife and children."⁶² We cannot disconnect our analysis of the exploitation of women from our analysis of educational ideologies—the latter are complicit in maintaining the authority of the father. "It seems in this connection, that the relation between the system of economic oppression among social classes and the system that can be labeled patriarchal has been subjected to very little dialectical

⁶¹ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, 125.

⁶² Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 83.

analysis, and has been once again reduced to a hierarchical structure."⁶³ The Law of the Father has no master—save fear and illusion—you are only accountable to yourself.

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

What is a woman? I believe I've already answered that there is no way I would "answer" that question. The question "what is . . . ?" is the question—the metaphysical question—to which the feminine does not allow itself to submit.⁶⁴

How do I speak-as-woman, woman-as-speaking-subject?

As French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous urges, I must learn to steal language and fly with it, never failing to be subversive.⁶⁵ I must open spaces and into those spaces throw my voice, trembling or not. And curve the mirror of reproduction so that the economy of the same is not the only possibility. My curved mirror can reflect and create thousands of possibilities for it is only with a pedagogy that allows me to speak-as-subject that I can ever begin to hear what others are saying and that I can ever begin to speak.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁵ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 258.

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Behind, the Road is Blocked: Art Education and Nostalgia

Paul Duncum

Abstract

Proponents of high culture have trusted its power as an antidote to contemporary social ills. However, art educators should be aware that the history of such attempts is a history of failure. It is a history of gradual marginalisation, both of the critique and the critics, and of increasingly conservative political reaction. The critique represents, today as it has always done, a nostalgia for an idealized past. But the failure of the critique suggests that there can be no going back. It is argued that the increasing failure of this critique to positively influence social and cultural life is a warning that the future of art education lies elsewhere. As representative of this critique, this paper discusses the English cultural critics Edmund Burke, Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot; the Frankfurt School Marxists Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse; and the Postmodern French critic Jean Baudrillard. Finally, guidelines for a future, contemporary art education are advanced.