Re-viewing Feminist Influences in Transnational Art: A Multimodal, Fugal Analysis of Mary Kelly’s Texts of ‘Maternal Desire’

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ABSTRACT:
The 1970s womens art movement is a foundational influence in transnational contemporary art. Developing an innovative, multimodal, fugal approach the paper discusses the formative influence of American feminist conceptual artist Mary Kelly’s representations of ‘the intricacies of maternal desire’, in her work based on her own experience of parturition. The discussion focuses on an interview with Mary Kelly and artist son Kelly Barrie by Ruth Skilbeck at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008 Sydney Biennale, and includes her photographs of Kelly and Barrie within their collaborative video installation Antepartum 1973 and Astralfields and Other Manifestations 2008, exhibited at the Biennale. With reference to early pieces including Post-Partum Document 1972-78, the paper argues that not only are Kelly’s works highly significant in their own right, radically bringing together conceptual art and feminist self-based narrative art; as constitutive, canonical texts of the 1970s women’s art movement, they initiated new multimodal forms of contemporary art and modes of dialogic textual expression that have formatively influenced the development of contemporary art and its intergenerational, social and cultural communication in transnational culture.

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Multimodal text analysis has become a crucial part of research, teaching and practice for a wide range of academic and practical disciplines. A variety of techniques, theoretical frameworks and methodologies have therefore evolved for such analysis. Multimodal analysis includes the analysis of communication in all its forms, but is particularly concerned with texts which contain the interaction and integration of two or more, semiotic resources – or ‘modes’ of communication – in order to achieve the communicative. The first derives from, among other influences, a synthesis of social semiotics, European semiotics and critical discourse analysis traditions. A multimodal analysis is used to investigate for the presence of situated meanings of uchi/soto in Japanese advertising. The analysis supports the proposition that discourses of gendered relations of uchi/soto may be found in contemporary Japanese television advertising. The article argues that relations of uchi/soto provide a unique window into Japanese consumption behavior. Chino model demonstrates how one can strategically reconstitute meanings of place by repurposing pieces and styles of art. I employ the terms uchi/soto here as part of the theory of cultural praxis, as laid out by Bachnik and her colleagues (Bachnik & Quinn, 1994) and as an illustration of both a micro and macro theory of intercultural rhetoric, using the theory of inside/outside positionalities of Ashby (2013a).

The issue of Feminism in English Literature is not new but due to patriarchal society, it has been suppressed and overlooked. The existence of inequalities between men and women are not natural but social taboo. One may ask. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the authors who wrote about feminism, advocates in her A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) that women must be treated equally because they have to play a crucial and vital role in society especially bringing up children. She attacks male thinker and scholar like Rousseau who argued that women did not need education but she supported educ Transnational feminism challenges the view of “global/international” feminisms that erases differences within and between nations. There is a tendency toward a Eurocentric/Colonial viewpoint that melds difference into one “feminist mold.” Transnational Feminisms highlight the varying contexts of women’s lives looking at multiple frameworks of difference. Transnational Feminists focus on the link between women’s situated lives and the ever-changing relationships in which they are engaged in in terms of movements of people, capital and ideas. This course will challenge Western feminists to exami