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DISSERTATION DESCRIPTION

Reading Cookbooks: A Multimodal Approach

Contribution of Dissertation	THIS STUDY BREAKS NEW GROUND AS IT POSITIONS COOKBOOKS AND ITS GENDERED DISCOURSE AS RHETORICAL TEXTS, RELEVANT AND WORTHY OF SCHOLARLY STUDY. COOKBOOKS ARE MORE THAN A SIMPLE COLLECTION OF RECIPES; THE WAYS IN WHICH THE TEXTS CONSTRUCT AND ARE CONSTRUCTED BY SOCIETY ESTABLISH THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AS RHETORICAL TEXTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THIS DISSERTATION USES COOKBOOKS AS A VEHICLE TO BROADEN AND EXPAND THE NEW MEDIA CONCEPTS OF MULTIMODALITY AND REMEDIATION (AS THEORIZED BY KRESS, BOLTER, AND GRUSIN). THESE CONCEPTS, WHEN APPLIED TO COOKERY TEXTS, ESTABLISH THE TEXTS AS RHETORICAL. THROUGH THE EFFECT OF THIS APPLICATION OF NEW MEDIA TERMINOLOGY TO AN “OLD” MEDIA TEXT, MULTIMODALITY AND REMEDIATION ARE BROADENED TO HELP ESTABLISH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. RATHER THAN ONLY USING THESE TERMS TO DEFINE AND EXPLORE NEW MEDIA, THESE ARE IDEAS WHICH ARE WIDELY APPLICABLE TO EXPLORING A VARIETY OF TEXTS, THUS ESTABLISHING THE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPLICABILITY OF NEW MEDIA THEORY.
Argument of Dissertation	THIS STUDY EXPLORES COOKING AS A GENDERED PRACTICE. ESTABLISHING COOKING AS A WOMEN’S DISCOURSE, I ARGUE THE COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES OF A DISCOURSE CONSTRUCTED FOR WOMEN AND BY WOMEN HAS A POWERFUL RHETORICAL IMPACT WHICH ESTABLISHES WOMEN AS EXPERTS WITHIN THEIR OWN (PRIVATE) SPHERE. THIS DISCOURSE NOT ONLY ENABLES WOMEN TO VALUE THEIR OWN EXISTENCE BUT IT ALSO GIVES THEM A SPACE IN WHICH TO PERFORM RHETORIC. AS WOMEN HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY SILENCED AND PREVENTED FROM USING DOMINANT COMMUNICATIVE METHODS, THEY HAVE NEEDED TO DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES. I ARGUE THAT THESE ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES STEM FROM THE CONCEPT OF “MAKING DO,” OR OF USING THE AVAILABLE MEANS TO MEET THEIR GOAL. THIS ENCOURAGES FLEXIBILITY AND CONSTANT REVISION AND REMEDIATION. THE METHODS THESE WOMEN USE TO “MAKE DO” OR TO COMMUNICATE VIA ALTERNATIVE MEANS ARE MULTIMODAL. I ESTABLISH THIS MULTIMODALITY OF COOKERY DISCOURSE THROUGH WHAT I SEE AS THE MAJOR MODES USED: SOCIAL, VISUAL, AND PERFORMATIVE.
Chapter Outline	CHAPTER 1 PROVIDES A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR COOKBOOKS, ESTABLISHING COOKERY DISCOURSE AS A WOMEN’S RHETORICAL PRACTICE. CHAPTER 2 PRESENTS THE MAIN ARGUMENT THAT COOKERY DISCOURSE IS MULTIMODAL, AS IT RELIES ON THE PRINCIPLE OF REMEDIATION OR “MAKING DO,” AS IT ANALYZES THE FORMAT AND CONTENT CHANGES IN PRINT RECIPES THROUGHOUT HISTORY AS IT TRANSFORMS FROM AN ORAL DISCOURSE TO A VISUAL ONE. IN CHAPTER 3 I ANALYZE THE RHETORICAL PRACTICE OF RECIPE SHARING, AS IT IS CENTRAL TO CONSTRUCTING THE KITCHEN AS A SITE OF COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN. I ARGUE THAT THIS COMMUNITY IS ESTABLISHED AND PERPETUATED BY THE DISCOURSE, AND IS BEST SEEN THROUGH EXPLORING THE COMMUNITY COOKBOOK. CHAPTER 4 EXPLORES THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF COOKERY TEXTS, AS THE RECIPE’S STRUCTURE ON THE PAGE COMMUNICATES THE DISCOURSE’S VALUES AND GOALS. CHAPTER 5 LOOKS AT CONTEMPORARY TELEVISION COOKING SHOWS TO ESTABLISH THE MODE OF PERFORMANCE AS CENTRAL TO THE DISCOURSE AND AS KEY TO MAKING THE SOCIAL AND VISUAL MODES WORK TOGETHER.

Relevance to Future Research	THIS STUDY, THE FIRST EXTENDED EXPLORATION OF COOKERY TEXTS, ESTABLISHES THE COOKBOOK AS A SUBJECT WORTHY OF SCHOLARLY STUDY WITHIN THE FIELD OF RHETORIC, THUS MAKING A SPACE FOR ITSELF IN THE RHETORICAL TRADITION. IT ALSO FURTHERS WORK BEGUN BY BIZZELL, GLENN, AND OTHERS CONCERNING THE LIMITED REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN RHETORICAL CANON, AND AIDS IN THE REWRITING OF RHETORICAL HISTORY AS WOMEN'S STORIES CONTINUE TO BE ADDED. FURTHER, THIS STUDY ALSO POINTS TOWARD FUTURE WORK IN NEW MEDIA, AS I ARGUE FOR THEIR WIDESPREAD USE.
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