

"To Repair is to Care": A Feminist Perspective on Ceramic Restoration and an Ethics of Dependence

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Abstract: There is no investigation of ethics for ceramic restorations at this point in feminism's study. However, in terms of those who are responsible for restoring broken things, attending to one's material life, making decisions about keeping or discarding what one has... These have structural parallels with the caregiving activities that feminist ethics has been studying over nearly a quarter century. From the perspective of care ethics and feminist materialism, this article argues that ceramic restorations are indeed instances of ethical activities with broader theoretical implications beyond object conservation alone. Based on GILLIGAN'S care ethics, KITTAY' s ethic of dependability, BUTLER'S account of vulnerability, BARAD'S feminist materialism, AND UNESCO cultural heritage documentation, This article explores how restoration Practices expose the work of caring; Perform an ethical dimension of Dependence Among People And Things; And present A Material Critique Of Perfectionist Standards And Discard Norms In Contemporary Culture. The Japanese practice of kintsugi can serve as a model case for repair as both an aesthetic principle and moral stance.

Keywords: Care Ethics, Ceramic Restoration, Feminist Materialism, Ethics of Dependence, Kintsugi, Material Culture, Vulnerability.

1. Introduction

Break it up, and then the following questions will be non-practical. Should the damaged goods be fixed, resold or scrapped? What kind of expenditure of labour is needed? Which relationship needs to be retained and which objects need more care? Since feminism has always acknowledged that these problems have a political component. cultural tendency of replacement instead of repair, regard damage as occasions to dispose of things without caring whether they deserve it or not; there is neither neutrality nor a logical basis underlying these tendencies.

Ceramic repairs fit within the scope of these problems to some extent. Since ceramics are used for practical purposes, a change could be seen as simple; however, carrying symbols and storing the memory of daily life make damaged objects need more than just an exchange. When conservators address broken items, they have made decisions outside of adhesive materials and colour; They choose to continue the future course of their history of harm and life after being processed. These choices have been considered ethical, so they need to be explained.

Feminist Ethics, and particularly care Ethics have not yet been systematically applied to the restoration Practice. Based on Gilligan, Noddings and other scholars' work to develop care ethics, which provides a concrete depiction of moral life as an organized system of relationship-based responsiveness and attention instead of abstractions or individualised claims[1][2][3]. Although these accounts mainly talk about interpersonal relationships, they are also very relevant to the restoration of things. The objects lack of consciousness; they need care and attention, and may suffer harm due to negligence as described in the case studies on care ethics among humans.

Japanese's kintsugi, which repairs broken ceramic objects by attaching lacquer mixed with gold to make the repair visible rather than hidden, can provide an interesting example for our argument. Through making the history of breaking

visible rather than concealing it, kintsugi rejects the belief that damage is shameful and replacement by an imperfect copy of original unity after repair. Proposes instead that breakage and repair are parts of an object's life, and thus it is worth showing these traces of care rather than hiding them away. Based on this, I believe Kintsugi falls under the category of feminist ethics and aesthetics; It will clear up the reason for restoring in general.

2. Theoretical Foundations

Gilligan, responding to Kohlberghs' focus on justice at the expense of caring in his study of moral psychology [1], proposed for the first time the care ethics tradition that emphasizes responsible duties based on interpersonal relationships among particular persons. Noddings extended this base line of care- based ethics to provide a broader framework for morality, and suggested that true moral participation should entail motivational displacement towards the cared-for person's requirements. Tronto then expanded care ethics to include politics, suggesting that care should be understood as a social action where the allocation patterns reflect and reproduce existing power Structures and inequalities. [11] Furthermore, it also showed how care ethics could be applied outside of the domestic domain and provided an actual remedy for liberalism's emphasis on autonomy and contract [13].

Kittay has further expanded on this and established an ethics of dependency to replace the traditional notion that dependency is merely a special case within morality. According to Kittay, dependence is inherent in the nature of humans; thus, traditional theories about morality and individuals based on autonomous beings fail adequately to comprehend the bonds among people related by love. Robinson has also used this argument to examine the International Environment, showing how the invisible nature of caring Relationships in the basic Ethical system exerts effects at Micro and Macro Levels respectively.

Butler's accounts of precarity and vulnerability also offer

theoretical support in the interpretation of recovery. Butler does not consider vulnerability to be a lack of, but rather an ontic state; To be embodied means being in danger; Therefore, the proper moral reaction is acknowledgement and action. broken ceramics are precarities according to Butler's definition; They are fragments broken from a whole, which can exist only by being selected for attention [4].

Barad's feminist materialism considers that the object in the paper is a moral entity [5]. According to Barad, matter participates actively in producing meanings through intra-action; entities constitute each other mutually constituting relations among them. Applicable for the ceramic reformation, objects to be repaired are no longer merely passive participants in treatment but active materials that generate what rehabilitation needs. Bennett's account of thing-power extends this point to propose that objects have life-force that requires moral attention not available in an anthropocentric perspective. Puig de la Bellacosa uses these concepts directly to engage in care-theoretical practices, stating that the act of taking care of objects is morally and politically essential; it gathers overlooked individuals into relation of observation and duty [14]. Haraway's idea of "staying with the trouble" means ethical life needs to be in close contact with harmed and weak things, not fantasising about perfect origins [15].

3. Ceramic Restoration as Feminist Practice

The history of ceramic restoration is also a history of gendered labour not yet systematically examined in feminist terms. Patterns in conservation history reveal that restoration skills have been distributed along lines paralleling broader social valuations of care labour: the materially intimate work of actual repair occupies lower institutional status than theoretically oriented work of collection management and attribution [8]. Graham and Thrift have documented similar patterns in maintenance and repair culture more broadly, showing how the labour of keeping things functioning is systematically rendered invisible within frameworks that privilege production over preservation [17].

Kintsugi has made politics of repair especially prominent. Within Japanese ceramics culture, and closely related to the aesthetic ideas of wabi-sabi and tea ceremony tradition, kintsugi has been recognised as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO under its 2003 Convention for granting recognition that such practices are carriers of knowledge systems developed through generations' transmission [7]. What Kintsugi shows is that love for repairs; The gold trace a crack becomes a visible proof of decisions to save something from loss, as well as the hard work put into preservation.

The feminist dimensions of this visibility are significant. A persistent insight of care ethics is that care labour has been systematically rendered invisible-performed privately, taken for granted, ascribed to nature rather than skill [11]. Kintsugi's insistence on making repair visible constitutes both an aesthetic and political refusal of the idea that care must erase its own traces. Adamson situates practices like kintsugi within a longer struggle for recognition of the knowledge and skilled labour involved in making and maintaining objects [8]. Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe's research on object maintenance within domestic contexts similarly demonstrates that the work of keeping things in repair is a morally significant practice that existing frameworks of consumption render largely invisible [16].

4. An Ethics of Dependence in Material Culture

Kittay's ethics of dependence treats dependence, not as an exception but as constituting our very nature; thus it is beyond the reach of existing moral systems. Taking the above insight that interpersonal relationships can be extended to object relations is more convincing; objects also carry care networks and sustained focus in these webs outside personal interactions. Among the ceramics that have survived for more than two thousand years, none are durable in themselves; instead, each one has been preserved and handed down through subsequent generations' choices—whether to mend or replace—or thus maintained inside a live network of care. Continued existence for the objects themselves is an accumulation of care decisions made over time by those whose faces we cannot see.

According to the periodic evaluations by UNESCO of World Heritage Sites' states over time, conflicts, neglect and environmental damage are still major obstacles facing cultural heritage around the world [19]. Cultural loss is no longer just about losing its shape, but rather disrupting relationships that people have had to care for in order to maintain connection with the distant past. Adamson considers this failure within a general pattern that has underestimated the knowledge and labour contained in made things as popularised through large-scale industrialisation and the widespread distribution of one-use items. The research by Henare, Holbraad and Wastell on the artefacts ethnographically indicates that objects do not function passively as bearers of people's meanings; they actively shape social orders which will persist until there is continuous attention from humans [18].

Restoration ethics also has the temporal attribute. Restoration of a broken thing implies taking over after it has started something that existed before the restorer came and continues to go beyond them. Risatti believed that craft is a form of passing on knowledge by means of repeated practice in successive generations, so the issues of protection also extend outwards into living traditions concerning the skillful use of attention [9]. Weil's account of the transformation of museum practice also argues that institutions responsible for cultural objects have duties not only towards the objects themselves, but also to their associated communities' histories [20].

Restoration ethics' relational framework includes both the conservator-object relationship and a triad formed by the conservator, the object itself, and its cultural significance as part of the community. Jackson's research on the repair and maintenance culture believes that the continuous activities involved in maintaining things' functions constitute a dispersed collective activity that integrates people, places, and events through time [10]. A restorable ceramic item is a member of the community that contains its history; hence, such management involves everyone in some way. As required by care ethics, this shows that the moral life cannot be reduced to an isolated agent; rather, it needs to have its basis in relation and extends generationally [11][13].

5. Discussion

What care ethics, feminist materialist theory, and the ethics of dependence jointly imply is that restoration is not merely an activity with ethical dimensions but is itself an ethical act-performed through sustained attention to particular objects

and through the maintenance of relationships among communities responsible for their care. This has direct implications for how restoration work is taught, valued, and institutionally supported.

The one-sided effect of the assessment of restoration expenses. Based on the assertion of care ethics that systematic neglect has been imposed upon caring work by its feminisation and invisibility; then to professionalise restoration necessitates a system to make it known as labour under institutions. [11][12] UNESCO's frameworks for intangible cultural heritage serve as a reference, but the current ones are mainly focused on preserving objects and traditions; The labour of many conservators who keep these heritages alive day by day is often overlooked [7][19].

According to Barad's feminist materialism, the restoration-generated human-object interactions actually constitute legitimate ethical relationships with their own authenticity of responsiveness and recognition of material agency ignored by traditional anthropocentrism. Bennett's concept of "thing-power" is in line with this; Ethical importance of restoration also includes responsibility towards the vitality and particular identities of things themselves. [6] Puig de la Bellacasa's framework of taking care of things as a form of political practice, and Haraway's belief in staying close to the trouble of broken Worlds Together indicate that the Ethics of Restoration points towards an expansion of moral Attention; It treats materials not just as resources for people's activities but as domains where Ethical Relationships exist. [14] [15]

6. Conclusion

Love is expressed through affection as an act of taking care and assuming responsibility for oneself. Based on this foundation, an argument system based on feminist care ethics, the ethic of dependency, feminist materialism and ceramic restorations has been constructed in turn to converge at last onto one idea: The act of attending to broken things no longer only requires technical or aesthetic accomplishment; Rather, it should be regarded as bearing other kinds of burdens: obligations, vulnerability and responsibilities among people living together in society. Kintsugi has served for all time as a generative illustration by refusing to hide the loss and insisting that the labour of repair should be visible. In showing fractures and repairs in action, suggest a new kind of caring - leave behind something worth remembering as evidence that it has been touched.

Feminist Dimensions Operate Simultaneously at Two Levels in This Argument. In short, this study found that the gendered politics of care labour render restoration work invisible and underpriced in terms of both institutional and cultural systems; This kind of phenomenon is not an isolated incident but a result of extending similar issues faced by various fields of caring professions to material culture. In terms of construction, the paper puts forward that care ethics and feminist materialist theories together provide theoretical support to explain what restoration is and why it is significant: both for the objects restored as well as for the identity and history of the communities they represent. Future studies can be carried out on various forms of restorative practices across different contexts, institutions' supporting mechanisms for conservation work need to be explored in more detail; also,

through feminist-materialist explorations of human-object ethical relations, an enriched theoretical foundation can be established.

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