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Embodied Resistance: Rereading Tarabotti Through Feminist Phenomenology

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Abstract

Long before modern feminism, Venetian nun Arcangela Tarabotti waged a powerful war of words. This paper re-examines her fiery writings through feminist phenomenology, revealing an early, incisive critique of patriarchal power. Drawing on insights prefiguring Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of woman as Other, Tarabotti dissected how forced cloistering and socioeconomic pressures impacted women's lived realities. Analyzed through concepts like Iris Marion Young's "discontinuous unity" and Gail Weiss's "embodied intercorporeality," Tarabotti reveals how societal forces inscribed virtue onto women's bodies, using embodiment to theorize her confinement and critique gendered constraints. This positions Tarabotti as a prescient thinker whose seventeenth-century explorations of embodied resistance and structural critique resonate with contemporary feminist thought, urging a re-evaluation of its historical lineage.

Keywords: arcangela tarabotti, feminist phenomenology, gender and power, embodied resistance