

KARUN ÇEKEM

Ege University, Turkey

CONTRASTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY IN "TOMORROW'S EVE" AND "NO WOMAN BORN"

Abstract:

The body and bodily integrity have been long-discussed concepts in feminist theory, since oppression on women is exercised through disintegration practices. This can be realized not only on a physical and immediate level – as seen in physical and sexual violence towards women – but also on a discursive and symbolic level. On the other hand, theories such as cyborg feminism argue that bodily integrity is not a desirable asset per se, since it reinforces the reduction of women to "bíoï" and eliminates individual experiences. In that case, what do we mean by bodily integrity and to what extent is it desirable? Or is the very idea of integrity a limitation itself?

I will discuss this issue by comparing two literary works of science fiction: Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel "Tomorrow's Eve" (1886) and C. L. Moore's short story "No Woman Born" (1944). Both texts blur and question the boundary between what's authentically human and what's machinery through artificial female bodies, the former being an android and the latter a cyborg. Yet, although both texts deal with the female body as an artifact constructed piece by piece, "Tomorrow's Eve" executes this by means of a penetrating and dismantling male gaze which objectifies the female body and deprives it of its autonomy, while "No Woman Born" contains within itself a potential for liberation and autonomy through "autopoiesis".

Keywords:

science fiction, feminism, cyborg, bodily integrity