



# Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality

*Gayle Salamon*

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## **Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality** Gayle Salamon

We believe we know our bodies intimately—that their material reality is certain and that this certainty leads to an epistemological truth about sex, gender, and identity. By exploring and giving equal weight to transgendered subjectivities, however, Gayle Salamon upends these certainties. Considering questions of transgendered embodiment via phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud and Paul Ferdinand Schilder), and queer theory, Salamon advances an alternative theory of normative and non-normative gender, proving the value and vitality of trans experience for thinking about embodiment.

Salamon suggests that the difference between transgendered and normatively gendered bodies is not, in the end, material. Rather, she argues that the production of gender itself relies on a disjunction between the "felt sense" of the body and an understanding of the body's corporeal contours, and that this process need not be viewed as pathological in nature. Examining the relationship between material and phantasmatic accounts of bodily being, Salamon emphasizes the productive tensions that make the body both present and absent in our consciousness and work to confirm and unsettle gendered certainties. She questions traditional theories that explain how the body comes to be—and comes to be made one's own—and she offers a new framework for thinking about what "counts" as a body. The result is a groundbreaking investigation into the phenomenological life of gender.

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