

Gayle Salamon, "Boys of the Lex: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality"

1. "People do indeed feel that aspects of their being (in this case, their bodies) are natural and essential and that unexamined feeling is itself essential to embodiment. I do not need to consider the history of the body, or even the personal history of my own body, to inhabit it phenomenologically... The phenomenological body presents itself as simply 'there,' as unproblematically available to me. Yet this simple givenness is a fiction, albeit a necessary one. Anything that I might do with my body, any action that I perform with it, any way that I inhabit it acquires legibility only in the context of all of my body's previous actions, positions, and modes of being" [582]. What does Salamon mean here, and in what way is she making the same point as Drew Leder? What does she mean by the last sentence here, and does it represent a divergence from Leder's position?

2. In the transgender theories Salamon criticizes, she says that "the transgendered subject can be distinguished from the normatively gendered subject by the specificity of hir embodiment and by hir ability to self-define apart from the oppressive social structures that determine gender" [586]. Explain what these positions look like, and why Salamon thinks they are missing something.

3. Salamon contrasts the "real" body that seems to be imagined by the trans theorists she opposes [esp. 591] with the "real" body of phenomenology. This latter body is real in two senses: first, "what constitutes something as real is not its materiality but a horizon of possibility, an openness to all of the different experiences that it represents to any given person" [594]; and second, "it points toward its own capacity to exceed what we suppose about it. To be real, in this sense, is to hold one's body and one's self open to the possibilities of what one cannot know or anticipate in advance" [594]. Explain these two, contrasting understandings of "real." How does thinking about gendered/sexed bodies as "real" in the phenomenological sense change the way you think about gender and sex as "essential" or "constructed"?

4. Salamon opens and closes the article with a reading of the two calendar photos from "Boys of the Lex 2002." What does she tell us at the beginning, what does she tell us at the end, and how does this closing statement exemplify her larger argument? How does Salamon's conclusion prefigure Sara Ahmed's argument about orientation?