

**BREAKING
FEMINIST
WAVES**

New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment

EDITED BY CLARA FISCHER
AND LUNA DOLEZAL



Breaking Feminist Waves

Series Editors
Alison Stone
Philosophy and Religion
Lancaster University
Lancaster, UK

Linda Martín Alcoff
Department of Philosophy
Hunter College
New York, NY, USA

“This series promises to invite feminist thinkers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds to think theoretically about feminism’s history and future work that needs to be done. I look forward to incorporating titles from this series into my women’s and gender studies teaching.”

—Alison Piepmeier, *Director, Women’s and Gender Studies Program, The College of Charleston*

For the last twenty years, feminist theory has been presented as a series of ascending waves. This picture has had the effect of deemphasizing the diversity of past scholarship as well as constraining the way we understand and frame new work. The aim of this series is to attract original scholars who will offer unique interpretations of past scholarship and unearth neglected contributions to feminist theory. By breaking free from the constraints of the image of waves, this series will be able to provide a wider forum for dialogue and engage historical and interdisciplinary work to open up feminist theory to new audiences and markets.

LINDA MARTÍN ALCOFF is Professor of Philosophy at Hunter College and the City University of New York Graduate Center, USA. Her most recent books include *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*; *The Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy* (co-edited with Eva Kittay); *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (co-edited with Moya, Mohanty and Hames-Garcia); and *Singing in the Fire: Tales of Women in Philosophy*.

ALISON STONE is Professor of European Philosophy at Lancaster University, UK. She is the author of *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel’s Philosophy*; *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference*; *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*; and *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*; and the editor of *The Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*.

More information about this series at
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14794>

Clara Fischer • Luna Dolezal
Editors

New Feminist
Perspectives on
Embodiment

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Clara Fischer
University College Dublin
Dublin, Ireland

Luna Dolezal
University of Exeter
Exeter, UK

Breaking Feminist Waves

ISBN 978-3-319-72352-5

ISBN 978-3-319-72353-2 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72353-2>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017961344

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover image: “Two Muslim Girls Wearing the Pink Hijab Scarf” by Kazuya Akimoto

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to gratefully acknowledge the Society for Women in Philosophy, Ireland (SWIPI). The idea for this book arose originally from the 2014 SWIPI conference ‘Women’s Bodies’ which took place in Dublin, Ireland and was funded by the Irish Research Council and hosted by University College Dublin. We are grateful to Professor Maria Baghramian for her continued support and ongoing mentorship. We would also like to thank the authors, our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, and the anonymous reviewers who gave their time to provide feedback on the chapters and manuscript.

CONTENTS

1	Contested Terrains: New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment	1
	Clara Fischer and Luna Dolezal	
Part I	Normative Bodies, Ethics, and Vulnerability	15
2	A Genealogy of Women’s (Un)Ethical Bodies	17
	Gail Weiss	
3	The Normal Body: Female Bodies in Changing Contexts of Normalization and Optimization	37
	Julia Jansen and Maren Wehrle	
4	How Do We Respond? Embodied Vulnerability and Forms of Responsiveness	57
	Danielle Petherbridge	

Part II	New Directions in Feminist Theory	81
5	Revisiting Feminist Matters in the Post-Linguistic Turn: John Dewey, New Materialisms, and Contemporary Feminist Thought	83
	Clara Fischer	
6	Feminist and Transgender Tensions: An Inquiry into History, Methodological Paradigms, and Embodiment	103
	Lanei M. Rodemeyer	
7	Expressing the World: Merleau-Ponty and Feminist Debates on Nature/Culture	125
	Kathleen Lennon	
Part III	Sex, Violence, and Public Policy	145
8	Are Women's Lives (Fully) Grievable? Gendered Framing and Sexual Violence	147
	Dianna Taylor	
9	Sex Trafficking, Reproductive Rights, and Sovereign Borders: A Transnational Struggle over Women's Bodies	167
	Diana Tietjens Meyers	
10	Routine Unrecognized Sexual Violence in India	183
	Namrata Mitra	

Part IV	Pregnancy and Reproductive Technology	201
11	Performing Pregnant: An Aesthetic Investigation of Pregnancy	203
	EL Putnam	
12	The Metaphors of Commercial Surrogacy: Rethinking the Materiality of Hospitality Through Pregnant Embodiment	221
	Luna Dolezal	
Index		245

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Luna Dolezal is Lecturer in Medical Humanities and Philosophy at the University of Exeter, UK. Her research is primarily in the areas of applied phenomenology, philosophy of embodiment, philosophy of medicine and medical humanities. She is the author of *The Body and Shame: Phenomenology, Feminism and the Socially Shaped Body* (2015) and the co-editor of *Body/Self/Other: The Phenomenology of Social Encounters* (2017).

Clara Fischer is an EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Centre for Gender, Feminisms, and Sexualities and Co-director of the John Dewey Research Project at University College Dublin. She is the author of *Gendered Readings of Change: A Feminist-Pragmatist Approach* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), co-editor of *Irish Feminisms: Past, Present and Future* (2015) and guest editor of a special issue of *Hypatia* on ‘Gender and the Politics of Shame’ (2018). She is completing a monograph on containment and the gendered politics of shame in an Irish context, and has research interests in the politics of emotion and embodiment, Irish feminisms, gender and austerity, and feminist-pragmatism.

Julia Jansen is the Director of the Husserl Archives and Associate Professor of Philosophy at KU Leuven. She has published widely on Kantian and Husserlian phenomenology and on aesthetics. Her research has focused, for some time, on issues of imagination in classical phenomenology and philosophy as well as in the cognitive sciences. She is the editor of the English translation of Husserl’s works under the title Husserl’s Collected Works, co-editor of the *Phaenomenologica* book series and

co-editor of the journal *Phänomenologische Forschungen*. She has been teaching phenomenological feminist philosophy since 2002.

Kathleen Lennon is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hull, UK. Her primary research interests are in the imagination, embodiment, expression, phenomenology (particularly the work of Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir,) gender and old age. She is working on the second edition of *Theorising Gender* and a co-authored monograph *Old Age*. Recent publications include *Imagination and the Imaginary* (2015).

Diana Tietjens Meyers is Professor Emerita of Philosophy, University of Connecticut, Storrs, USA. She has held the Laurie Chair at Rutgers University and the Ellacuría Chair of Social Ethics at Loyola University, Chicago. She works in four main areas of philosophy—philosophy of action, feminist ethics and aesthetics, and human rights. She has published five monographs. The most recent of those is *Victims' Stories and the Advancement of Human Rights* (2016). *Being Yourself: Essays on Identity, Action, and Social Life* (2004) is a collection of her articles and chapters. Her most recent edited collection is *Poverty, Agency, and Human Rights* (2014).

Namrata Mitra is Assistant Professor of English at Iona College, New York, USA. She holds a PhD degree in Philosophy and Literature from Purdue University received in 2012. Her research interests include feminist philosophy, queer theory and postcolonial literature. Her research examines representations of sexual violence in South Asian literature, comparative postcolonial theories and the place of shame in nationalist movements.

Danielle Petherbridge is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at University College Dublin, Ireland. Previously she was Irish Research Council Marie Curie International Research Fellow at Columbia University, New York. She works broadly in the area of continental European philosophy, including critical theory, phenomenology, and philosophy and literature. Her current research project, entitled *Encountering the Other*, provides an examination of theories of intersubjectivity and self/other relations across different philosophical traditions. Her book publications include: *Body/Self/Other: The Phenomenology of Social Encounters* (2017) with Luna Dolezal, *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth* (2013), and *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays, with a Reply by Axel Honneth* (2011).

Emily Lauren Putnam is a visual artist, scholar, and writer working predominantly in performance art, video, sound and interactive media. Her work draws from multiple themes and sources, including explorations of gender and sexuality, play, materialism, and the study of place, which she investigates through personal and cultural lenses. Her research focuses on continental aesthetic philosophy, performance studies, digital studies and feminist theory. She is a member of the artists' groups Mobius (Boston) and Bbeyond (Belfast). Originally from the United States, she now teaches visual culture, art history and theory at the Dublin Institute of Technology in Ireland.

Lanei M. Rodemeyer is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University, USA. She works primarily in the areas of phenomenology, continental philosophy, the philosophy of time and feminist/gender philosophy of the body. She has published a book on Husserl's phenomenology of inner time-consciousness, *Intersubjective Temporality: It's About Time* (2006); another on phenomenology and theories of embodiment that includes diaries from Lou Sullivan, a gay male trans man, *Lou Sullivan Diaries* (1970–1980); and *Theories of Sexual Embodiment: Making Sense of Sensing* (2017).

Dianna Taylor is Professor of Philosophy at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Her research focuses on twentieth-century continental philosophy, especially the work of Michel Foucault, and contemporary feminist philosophy. She is co-editor of *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (2004) and *Feminist Politics: Identity, Difference, Agency* (2007), and is editor of *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (2010). Her current research brings into conversation the work of Foucault and contemporary feminist philosophers in order to theorize new ways of conceptualizing and countering the harm of sexual violence against women.

Maren Wehrle is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of Philosophy (Husserl Archives) at KU Leuven. Her publications include works on Husserlian and Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, feminist philosophy and cognitive psychology. Her research focuses on issues of attention (phenomenology and cognitive psychology), embodiment, normality and normativity. Recent publications include: 'Normality and Normativity in Experience', in Doyon/Breyer: *Normativity in Perception* (2015); 'Normative Embodiment. The Role of the Body in Foucault's Genealogy. A Phenomenological Re-reading', in

The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology (2016); and as editor (together with S. Luft) of the *Husserl Handbook*, published in 2017 by Metzler (Stuttgart).

Gail Weiss is Professor of Philosophy at George Washington University, Washington, DC, Executive Co-director of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, and General Secretary of the International Merleau-Ponty Circle. She is the author of *Existential Ambiguities: Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty* (Indiana University Press, forthcoming), *Refiguring the Ordinary* (2008), and *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (1999), and has edited/co-edited several volumes on phenomenology and embodiment. Her research and publications bring phenomenology into conversation with contemporary work in feminist theory, critical race theory, and disability studies to address the social, political and ethical implications of non-normative bodily experiences.



Contested Terrains: New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment

Clara Fischer and Luna Dolezal

Feminist theory and philosophy has evinced an ongoing scholarly interest in the body and embodiment. Corporeal feminism, as it has been called by some,¹ theorizes the effects of patriarchal power structures on the female body, and hence, on women's subjectivity and social position. As we progress into the twenty-first century, despite several decades of feminist activism and scholarship, women's bodies continue to be sites of control and contention both materially and symbolically. Issues such as reproductive rights and technologies, sexual violence, objectification and normalization, motherhood, sexuality, and sex trafficking, among others, continue to be pressing concerns for women's bodies in our contemporary milieu, arguably exacerbated in a neoliberal world, where bodies are instrumentalized as sites of human capital and biopolitical forces increasingly focus on controlling the minutiae of embodied life.²

New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment engages with these themes by building on the strong tradition of feminist thought focused on women's bodies, and by making novel contributions that reflect feminists'

C. Fischer (✉)
University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

L. Dolezal
University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

concerns—both theoretically and empirically (with implications for policy-making)—about gender and embodiment in the current context and beyond. The collection brings together essays from a variety of feminist scholars, who deploy diverse philosophical approaches, including phenomenology, pragmatism, and new materialisms, in order to reflect philosophically on the question of the status of women's bodies in the present day.

Given the feminist canonical engagement of the theme of embodiment, one might ask what, precisely, is new about *New Feminist Perspectives of Embodiment*? After all, there is a plethora of feminist texts on the topic, and a number of feminist theorists have charted and exposed the problematic history of the body, including the gendered body, in Western philosophy and critical thought. We view our volume as a continuation of this important, existing feminist work, with our specific contribution lying in an analysis of new technologies and policy issues in a globalized and neoliberal world, on the one hand, and the further development of feminist thought on the body, particularly addressing the theme of vulnerability, on the other.

With regard to the former, our volume includes a contribution from Tietjens Meyers, who discusses the contemporary global phenomenon of sex trafficking, which is structured by the demands of the sex industry and complicated by often contradictory national and international asylum, anti-trafficking, and human rights laws, having a direct impact on women's embodiment (through the often coercive movement and exploitation of women's bodies via trafficking and repatriation). Chapters by Dolezal and Putnam also highlight the pervasive medicalization and commercialization of pregnancy, which may, again, play out across transnational contexts and in settings where women's voices are silenced owing to technological, medicalized alienation, or to metaphors of hospitality engaged to sanitize economic framings of the use of women's bodies.

The volume also offers expositions of very recent developments in feminist theory, and how these might be employed to think fruitfully about embodiment. Lennon and Fischer draw on new materialisms as a way to theorize various dualisms, including the nature/culture dichotomy, and question whether and how the relationship between each of these realms should be negotiated in terms of our understanding of bodies and their meanings. Rodemeyer raises similar points in her explication of queer theory, noting an over-reliance on the discursive, which Fischer highlights as a common critique by new materialist and affect theorists—what she terms

the “new school”—of poststructuralist and postmodern theory more generally. Fischer, Lennon, and Rodemeyer thus engage the question of how and to what extent the discursive has been and should be emphasized in its relation to the body, and trace this through feminist critique and the recent development of novel theoretical frameworks. Interestingly, they each recommend a turn towards a complimentary, canonical body of work, or at least towards lesson-learning across several theoretical paradigms. In Lennon’s and in Rodemeyer’s case, this is a turn towards phenomenology, with a particular focus on Merleau-Ponty by Lennon, and in Fischer’s case, this is a turn towards pragmatism, specifically towards John Dewey’s work. Lennon, Rodemeyer, and Fischer thus bring into conversation recent feminist thought, including new materialism and transfeminism, with canonical work to develop theoretical frameworks with which to think about the body.

Furthermore, many of the essays in the collection reflect a recent preoccupation with vulnerability in feminist scholarship, as the vulnerable body has been theorized and reconceptualized as an important starting point for understanding the ontological foundations of the human condition. In contrast to the mind/body dualism that has dominated the Western philosophical tradition—leading to a shunning of the inherent fleshiness, dependence, and vulnerability that characterizes ordinary human life—feminist theory seeks to overcome the continuing amnesia in Western philosophy about the fact that we have *all* been birthed from women’s bodies, and that our existence is *necessarily* characterized by long periods of physical dependency, weakness, and bodily vulnerability, usually managed by the hands of female caregivers. The traditional denial of our fleshy existence in the Western intellectual tradition, along with its gendered foundations, has led to a concomitant “flight from vulnerability,” which, as Debra Bergoffen argues, has been particularly damaging for conceptions of women’s embodiment.³ Women have been traditionally associated with the flesh, nature, and the body, and as a result, they have been denigrated, objectified, and afforded less social, political, and moral value than their male counterparts. Vulnerability as a concept in feminist theory offers possibilities for how we might ground an ethics and politics that does not deny our embodiment, but rather makes it central.⁴ As embodied subjects, we are always sites of vulnerability, not just to biological forces, which might render us sick or incapacitated, and not just vulnerable in relation to others, who have the capacity to wound or to care, but crucially we are also vulnerable to sociopolitical forces, where power relations “have an immediate hold upon” the body to use Foucault’s characterization.⁵

Attempting to understand our status as vulnerable subjects, in its multiple manifestations, has become a central theme of feminist thought and its significance is made manifest in this volume. For instance, Petherbridge's contribution discusses how embodied relationality and vulnerability between subjects designates both relations of power and possibilities for care through mutual embodied openness, and how these tensions might form the basis of an ethics of responsiveness. This is also a topic explored in Weiss' chapter, where she argues that considering the vulnerable body offers opportunities for ethical responses arising from positive experiences of corporeal agency. Taylor elaborates upon vulnerability in the context of sexual violence, and explores the implications of vulnerability, conceptualized as an embodied openness to others, as gendered and carrying with it the possibility of sexual harm. In Mitra's contribution, this focus on the vulnerable, gendered body is extended to an examination of embodied trauma, as she sets out how sexual violence and its effects are frequently denied in legal and public discourse, *contra* the lived experience of survivors.

As Judith Butler describes it, embodied vulnerability arises from our exposure to each other, but also to "social conditions and institutions,"⁶ which means, in late capitalist societies, a vulnerability structured and exacerbated by neoliberal systems and logics. Hence, a second related and recurrent theme of this volume is neoliberalism itself, as well as its normative construction and exploitation of gendered bodies as sociopolitically vulnerable to each other in the marketplace. What happens to women's bodies that are individualized, commodified, and commercialized? What are the effects of neoliberalism on public policies concerning sex trafficking and the prevention of sexual violence, for instance, in a context where gendered bodies are objects for profit-making? How does the capitalist imperative of neoliberalism intersect with gender oppression, but also with global disparities of wealth? How have feminist theorists taken account of the neoliberal structuring of norms concerning embodiment in light of class and gender differences, and in light of trans* experiences?

These questions are addressed in various ways throughout the essays in this volume. For example, Jansen and Wehrle's contribution directly discusses how neoliberalism emphasizes individual agency and choice for women, while this is underscored by an injunction for self-optimization that is in fact rooted in pernicious processes of normalization. Dolezal's chapter examines how the neoliberal tendency to frame many aspects of embodied life in economic terms, according to a market agenda, has

concrete consequences for how the discourses surrounding commercial reproductive technologies, such as gestational surrogacy, are formulated. Through her discussion of metaphor, Dolezal demonstrates that the ideologies of neoliberalism have seeped into ordinary language, becoming so pervasive that they shape our ethical intuitions and, hence, what we feel should be socially and legally permissible. In her discussion of sexual violence, Taylor draws out neoliberalism's individuating technique of assigning personal responsibility to women for reducing or eliminating their own risk, and highlights the attendant construction of deserving and undeserving victims in a neoliberal framing focused on women's personal behaviour. Relatedly, Tietjens Meyers explores sex trafficking and the lack of protection of women's human rights in an analysis of the (forced) movement of women across transnational, economic disparities.

Through a diversity of theoretical approaches, themes, and topics, the various essays in this collection demonstrate that feminist enquiries into our status as embodied subjects are far from being resolved, nor is the conversation about embodiment coming to an end. While it is arguably well-trodden ground in feminist thought, investigating the status of the gendered body remains a pressing issue not just in academic theory, but in medicine, law, popular culture, and politics, where gendered bodies continue to be a battleground when considering issues of recent and recurrent significance, such as sexual violence and reproductive rights. *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment* arises from the 2014 conference "Women's Bodies," which was organized by the Society for Women in Philosophy Ireland. The rich intellectual contributions of conference participants not only provided some of the content of this volume,⁷ but also demonstrated to the Editors the persistent relevance of the theme of embodiment within feminist scholarship.

NEW FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN THIS VOLUME

New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment is divided into four thematic sections: "Normative Bodies, Ethics, and Vulnerability," "New Directions in Feminist Theory," "Sex, Violence, and Public Policy," and "Pregnancy and Reproductive Technology," which emphasize different aspects of women's experience of embodiment and the theoretical questions and approaches which enframe them.

The essays in Part I, "Normative Bodies, Ethics, and Vulnerability," serve, in part, to introduce some of the key philosophical paradigms which

have dominated scholarship regarding women's bodies within Western thought, especially with respect to theorizations of ethics, ideas about normality and deviance, and recent feminist discussions of vulnerability as an ontological category that is intrinsically linked to human embodiment. Gail Weiss, in Chap. 2, opens the collection, exploring in detail the philosophical significance of female embodiment, especially in relation to the invisible "ideal" of the white, youthful, able male body that dominates the Western intellectual tradition. Drawing from philosophical thought that spans centuries, from Aristotle to Plato and from Beauvoir to Fanon, Weiss offers an invaluable overview of dominant philosophical ideas about embodiment that are so pervasive that they have become naturalized. Through her exegesis, Weiss demonstrates that the hegemony of consciousness/mind/reason as the source of moral agency and, hence, ethical practice continues to dominate Western philosophy. Weiss explains that it is only in relatively recent thought, particularly within feminism, that the body is portrayed as the ground of ethical obligation, rather than an obstacle to ethics and morality. Drawing on new feminist work regarding vulnerability, Weiss argues that considering the vulnerable body offers opportunities for ethical responses arising from positive experiences of corporeal agency. By highlighting some of the key themes and questions that have dominated feminist theory regarding embodiment, Weiss' chapter provides as an important conceptual framework for the chapters that follow.

In Chap. 3, Julia Jansen and Maren Wehrle explore the tensions between the "body as subject" and the "body as object," particularly in relation to female embodied experience under neoliberalism. They begin their discussion of our experience of being and having bodies as one that is fundamentally characterized by vulnerability, being "finite, exposed, and dependent on others and external forces." Our vulnerability renders us open to the world and its possibilities, but also susceptible to normalizing and disciplining forces, which can have pernicious effects, particularly, as their chapter demonstrates, on how women experience their own bodies. Through a careful phenomenological analysis of the embodied experience of the "normal"—a concept that continues to be hugely problematic when considering the social and political positioning of women's bodies—Jansen and Wehrle demonstrate that normality is not only implicated in what we might consider "optimal" bodily functioning, but is crucially a product of dominant ideologies and biopolitical forces. Drawing on the phenomenological insights of Edmund Husserl's and Michel Foucault's writing on discipline, biopolitics, and governmentality, Jansen and Wehrle's chapter

provides an important conceptual frame through which we might understand how women experience their bodies as sites of agency, power, and autonomy, but at the same time, are subject to the normalizing and disciplining sociocultural and political forces of their dominant milieu. While neoliberalism emphasizes individual agency and choice, this chapter makes the important point that the neoliberal emphasis on self-optimization is in fact rooted in pernicious processes of normalization.

Danielle Petherbridge's chapter (Chap. 4) returns us to the themes of vulnerability and ethics with respect to embodiment. Petherbridge engages with recent feminist scholarship on vulnerability in order to explore how, as intersubjective and embodied subjects, vulnerability is fundamental to social relations and how we develop as subjects. Engaging with feminist thinkers such as Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero, Petherbridge uses the fictional work of the South African novelist J.M. Coetzee, particularly *The Lives of Animals* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, to explore the intricacies of embodied vulnerability and its relationship to ethics and politics. As embodied vulnerability can provoke responses of both care and wounding, Petherbridge's aim is to address a pressing question when considering the utility of the concept of vulnerability within ethical discourses, namely: How are we to adequately respond to vulnerability? Using Coetzee's fictional landscapes as illustrative, Petherbridge reflects on how embodied relationality between subjects designates both relations of power and possibilities for care through mutual embodied openness and how these tensions might form the basis of an ethics of responsiveness. Weaving together reflections that span the ontological, ethical, and political dimensions of vulnerability, Petherbridge's chapter adds important insights to recent feminist scholarship on vulnerability and embodiment.

Essays in Part 2, "New Directions in Feminist Theory," focus on recent and emerging scholarship in feminist thought, with a particular emphasis on new materialisms and the formulation of transfeminism in light of the recent explosion in critical and theoretical trans scholarship. Each of these essays also engages canonical philosophical work, mainly pragmatism and phenomenology, to develop theories that reach across theoretical paradigms.

Clara Fischer's chapter (Chap. 5) engages recent feminist theorizing on the body by identifying a "new school" of post-linguistic turn feminism made up of affect theory and new materialism. In her analysis of this school's turn towards materiality and embodied affect, she specifically focuses on the confluences between John Dewey's pragmatism, and Karen

Barad's and Stacy Alaimo's new materialism in an exposition of each thinker's naturalist ontology. Among others, Fischer traces the concepts of "transaction," "transcorporeality," and "intra-action" across pragmatist and new materialist terrains, highlighting important convergences between pragmatism and new materialism, and, ultimately, arguing that pragmatism can constitute a valuable resource for contemporary feminists interested in the recent turn towards materiality.

In Chap. 6, Lanei M. Rodemeyer delineates four major paradigms in feminism and philosophy, namely the sex/gender dichotomy, queer theory, phenomenology, and transfeminism. The purpose of such a delineation lies, for Rodemeyer, in the need to draw out biases and shortcomings in specific theories, which feminism has historically undertaken with regard to supposedly neutral, but actually masculinist, philosophies. Rodemeyer begins by noting the somewhat troubled history of the relationship between feminism and transgender theory and practice—what she terms "feminist and transgender tensions"—and explains that "when we carry out analyses of gender and embodiment, the paradigms we employ can determine our outcomes – often in exclusive ways." It is precisely to avoid such pitfalls when theorizing embodiment that Rodemeyer sets out her four-fold categorization, exploring questions of essentialism and social constructionism, and the relationship between these as certain theories prioritize discursiveness or the body as a ground for analysis in and of itself. Rodemeyer presents transfeminism as a paradigm that draws on intersectionality to challenge "both simple identity politics and those positions that present the erasure of identity as an ultimate goal." In the end, Rodemeyer makes the case for a combination of approaches with which to think about embodiment in light of transgender experiences, arguing that this could ameliorate shortcomings in respective paradigms and thus provide a fruitful approach for theorists of the present.

Kathleen Lennon's chapter (Chap. 7) explores the recent movement towards new materialism in feminist theory. Lennon explores the contentious conceptual history of the nature/culture dichotomy, especially when considering feminism's fraught relationship to the natural sciences, where biological "facts" have been historically constructed to align with patriarchal ideologies regarding the social roles of men and women. Lennon brings Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodied subjectivity into dialogue with recent debates in feminist theory regarding our dependence on the materiality of embodiment and the subsequent implications for gender theory. Lennon mobilizes Merleau-Ponty's theorization of embodied

subjectivity in a co-constitutive relation with the world to collapse the binary of nature/culture, and hence to unsettle the question of biological sexed difference. With Merleau-Ponty's framework, Lennon demonstrates that nature can be conceived as a process with "non-determining sources which are both material and cultural," in relation to which subjects are always engaged in "creative transition."

In Part 3, "Sex, Violence, and Public Policy," chapters address important questions regarding sexual violence against women, questions which continue to be pertinent given the pervasiveness of such violence, as recently highlighted by the #MeToo social media campaign set up in response to allegations of mass sexual harassment and assault.⁸ Related to this are implications for public policies, both on the issues of sexual violence and sex trafficking, which unfold in complex legal, social, and political contexts that often render harms of a gendered, sexual nature invisible as harms as such.

In her chapter (Chap. 8), Dianna Taylor uses the Steubenville case, in which a young woman was gang-raped, to prompt questions concerning the liveability and attendant grievability of women's lives in the context of ambivalent responses to women's experiences of sexual violence. Drawing on Butler's concepts of precariousness, precarity, and framing, Taylor elaborates gender as a frame that entails women's disproportionate exposure to injury, in as far as "women achieve recognition only as subordinate, devalued, and therefore not fully liveable lives," and inhabit a specific embodiment that amplifies exposure and precarity in normalizing, depoliticized conditions. This much is borne out, for Taylor, by the deterministic and fatalistic acceptance of sexual violence as a "natural" part of human existence, and the effects this has on recognizing sexual violence as violence at all. While pointing to the widespread ambivalent social response to sexual violence as evidence for the inability to recognize women's lives as fully grievable, Taylor nonetheless ends her chapter on an optimistic note, highlighting the possibility of change, given the need for the constant (re)iteration of frames, which can thus be altered.

Diana Tietjens Meyers identifies, in Chap. 9, a maligning of the human rights, including reproductive rights, of women who have been trafficked from poorer countries to work in the sex industry in more affluent countries. Meyers highlights an inherent tension between what she calls a "law enforcement gestalt" and the protection of women's human rights, which renders the United States incapable of living up to its human rights obligations as set out in the Palermo Protocol, among others. Not only does the

US emphasis on law enforcement “funnel” trafficked women “into the criminal law apparatus” (which sets the bar for residency and visa requirements much higher than the standard asylum process), but it also endangers women and their families given the risk of re-trafficking following repatriation. Added to this is the legal requirement of having to be categorized as “severely trafficked” to obtain benefits along the lines of refugees, which, as Meyers points out, is onerous on trafficked women, as it requires having to prove complete non-complicity, even non-agency, in the trafficking process. As feminists have noted, many trafficked women engage traffickers to seek better opportunities in wealthier countries, and may subsequently find that traffickers use fraud and violence to coerce them into the sex industry. Meyers notes, however, that US law requires women to show that they were subject to deception and kidnapping by traffickers at the point of origin. Ultimately, Meyers notes that the current approach to sex trafficking in affluent countries “compound[s] the dishonour done” to sex trafficking victims’ “humanity, adding insult to injury.”

In Chap. 10, Namrata Mitra outlines how gendered scripts of honour, shame, and nationalism in South Asia ensure that routine violence against women is rendered invisible, both legally and in the public sphere as such. Mitra draws on Susan Brison’s work on trauma and the impact this has on one’s sense of self, and elaborates upon Pratiksha Baxi’s discussion of courtroom practices in sexual violence cases, which often erase trauma narratives entirely. By utilizing Judith Butler’s concept of “framing,” and her distinction between “recognition” and “recognizability,” Mitra establishes that “*how* a survivor of sexual violence is recognized is not based on harms of the violence, such as trauma, persisting within the survivor’s body,” but is governed, rather, by “the norms of gender, sexuality, shame, honour, communal and national identity” that “forge the frames of recognizability through which someone is recognized as a survivor.” Mitra then provides an insightful, brief genealogy of how such norms, including “nationalist fantasies imprinted on women’s bodies,” have resulted in the erasure of sexual violence in the public sphere or in its sole, patriarchal interpretation. Mitra closes her chapter by noting the important feminist resistance against routine sexual violence. She points to literature and to the activism of Meira Paibi (“Torch Bearers,” a group of feminist activists who staged a daring protest in response to the gang-rape of a Manipuri woman) to highlight the possibility and urgency of “disrupt[ing] the continuous reproduction of the dominant frames of sexual violence.”

The essays in Part 4, “Pregnancy and Reproductive Technology,” turn to explore one of the enduring material concerns of female embodiment, that of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. EL Putnam’s chapter (Chap. 11) discusses the performances and artistic practices of pregnant artists, such as Marni Kotak and Sandy Huckleberry, to shed light on patriarchal constructions and norms of reproduction and maternity. By drawing on Iris Marion Young’s phenomenology of pregnancy and related critiques of the deployment of alienating, antenatal technology that medicalizes birthing and reproduction, Putnam highlights the resultant marginality of women’s embodied subjectivity. Yet, for Putnam, the central problematic in this context is not technology itself, as she finds, following an elaboration of Heidegger’s conceptualization of technology in terms of *Gestell* (enframing), but that the specific uses of technology and their embeddedness in religious, political, and scientific discourses need to be questioned. To this end, Putnam examines religious iconography, particularly the figure of the Virgin Mary, to trace “the alienation of mothers-to-be from the embodied and phenomenological aspects of pregnancy” in the history of Western art. Ultimately, Putnam argues that a reading of pregnancy as “aesthetic experience” can redirect our attention from a teleological conception focused on the production of children towards an experiential reconfiguration of the intersubjective relationship between “the pregnant woman, the foetus, and others.”

Luna Dolezal’s chapter (Chap. 12) tackles the question of the ethicality of contemporary commercial surrogacy, a global practice that relies centrally on female embodiment. Dolezal demonstrates that the metaphoric landscape of contemporary commercial surrogacy practices is dominated by an economic rationality (wombs are rented, bodies are property, women are compensated). However, at the same time, concepts with a long philosophical history, such as the gift and hospitality, are invoked in order to mitigate the pecuniary aspects of surrogacy. Invoking hospitality in discourses about commercial surrogacy is, Dolezal argues, an attempt to make commercial transnational surrogacy, a practice mired in controversy and charges of exploitation and dehumanization, more palatable and alleviate questions about its potentially dubious ethicality. Dolezal examines the recent philosophical history of hospitality in the work of Levinas and Derrida, demonstrating that it is a concept with considerable gendered dimensions, where women are seen as the condition of the possibility of hospitality for autonomous male subjects, a reasoning that justifies and

mirrors the power relations inherent to many transnational commercial surrogacy practices, where underprivileged women in developing countries provide the service of gestating a child for women with significantly more social and economic power. To problematize this conception of hospitality, Dolezal turns to recent feminist theory on maternity and gestation which reappropriate and reconceptualize the idea of hospitality in the context of female embodiment, particularly the recent work of Irina Aristarkhova. Aristarkhova's reconception of hospitality through "the matrix" problematizes the idea that women's pregnant flesh can merely be an indifferent vessel for the other, but instead that women's bodies are the constitutional ground for kinship, subjectivity, and human relationality. Through problematizing the metaphors and concepts which underpin and, in some sense, justify commercial surrogacy practices, Dolezal's chapter is an important contribution to contemporary debates surrounding the global medical marketplace for assisted reproductive technologies—a marketplace where many potential injustices fall on women's shoulders.

While each of the chapters in this volume offers a novel approach or perspective, the overall aim of this collection is to scrutinize and uncover some of the taken-for-granted assumptions and norms that govern how bodies are experienced, perceived, valued, and thought about in the current context. Each of the essays uniquely addresses how women's embodiment still constitutes contested terrain, thereby critically examining a variety of contemporary social and political issues that materially affect women. To be sure, the collection does not engage all of the important questions regarding gendered embodiment in contemporary times, with topics such as religious expression, disability, and aesthetic surgery, to name just a few, falling outside of the scope of the work presented here. However, with original contributions from established and emerging feminist theorists, the volume adds another important set of voices to the ongoing feminist conversation about the material, social, and cultural status of the gendered body in the present day.

NOTES

1. Liz Frost. "Theorizing the Young Woman in the Body," *Body and Society* 11, no. 1 (2005): 65.
2. For example, see: Alison Phipps. *The Politics of the Body: Gender in a Neoliberal and Neoconservative Age*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014).

3. Debra Bergoffen, "The Flight from Vulnerability," in *Dem Erleben Auf Der Spur: Feminismus Und Die Philosophie Des Leibes*, eds. Hilge Landweer and Isabella Marcinski, 137–51, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), 137.
4. See: Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2004).
5. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25.
6. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2016), 33.
7. In particular, see chapters from Dolezal, Fischer, Meyers, Putnam, Taylor, and Weiss.
8. Khomami, Nadia, "#MeToo: how a hashtag became a rallying cry against sexual harassment," *The Guardian*, 20th October 2017: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/20/women-worldwide-use-hashtag-metoo-against-sexual-harassment>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bergoffen, Debra. 2016. The Flight from Vulnerability. In *Dem Erleben Auf Der Spur: Feminismus Und Die Philosophie Des Leibes*, ed. Hilge Landweer and Isabella Marcinski, 137–151. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- . 2016. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.
- Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
- Frost, Liz. 2005. Theorizing the Young Woman in the Body. *Body and Society* 11 (1) 63–85.
- Khomami, Nadia. 2017. #MeToo: How a Hashtag Became a Rallying Cry Against Sexual Harassment. *The Guardian*, October 20. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/20/women-worldwide-use-hashtag-metoo-against-sexual-harassment>
- Phipps, Alison. 2014. *The Politics of the Body: Gender in a Neoliberal and Neoconservative Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.