

Future Directions in Feminist Phenomenology  
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David Chu International Centre, WSS 2130

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## **Body Talk II: Narratives of the Body**

### ABSTRACT

The project *Bodily Integrity in Blemished Bodies* (see paper by Dr. J. Slatman) combines phenomenology with hermeneutics in that it considers reflection and articulation of bodily experiences crucial. This paper concentrates upon these hermeneutical, narrative aspects of the project.

I will begin with showing in what sense hermeneutics and narrativity play a part in the project by reflecting upon its method and main aim. The project aspires to investigate the experiences of their bodies of women who have undergone breast surgery after the diagnosis of breast cancer. In interviews women are questioned about identification with their changed body after surgery. Their answers to these questions give an impression of the manner in which their bodily experience contributes to their self-perception.

Also, the qualitative research method in the project, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), has hermeneutics as one of its theoretical underpinnings. In the interviews, the respondents are asked to tell their own story, by using their own words and idiom as much as possible. This is close to the characterization of their method by theoreticians in the field of narrative medicine (Charon 2006) and narrative psychology (Sools).

My overall aim in the project is a critical assessment of philosophical and sociological notions of narrative identity on the basis of the empirical material. In the end, I hope to come to a comprehensive theory of the narrative self that fits the statements in the interviews. In the paper, I will make a first beginning, by formulating critical questions to narrative theories of the self, on the basis of six case studies. I elucidate the main notions of narrative identity in contemporary philosophy, namely Marya Schechtman's *The Constitution of Selves* (1996) and Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* (1992, Fr. org. 1990), and ask whether they fulfil the demands of a theory that suits the stories of the interviewed women.