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## Review of *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, and Marginality* by Efrat Tseëlon

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**EFRAT TSEËLON (ed.), *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, and Marginality*. London: Routledge, 2001. xiii–xx + 180 pp. US \$80.00. ISBN 0–415–25105–2 (hbk). US \$27.95, ISBN 0–415–25106–0 (pbk).**

In the introduction to this collection of essays, the editor discusses ‘issues of masquerade as identity construction and as identity critique through a range of styles and narrative forms’ (p. 4). All of the scholarship here relies on a performative viewpoint to explore a range of symbolic and literal ‘masks’ in different social settings. In fact, the book’s blurb prepares us to delve into ‘the role of disguise in constructing, expressing, and representing marginalised identities, and in undermining easy distinctions between “true” identity and artifice.’

What I like very much about this collection is its eclectic nature; the authors use a wide variety of topics to comment on masquerade. Among others, these topics all focus on the way people – especially women – exist in the margins. Ilan-Alter writes of masks at 17th-century Parisian opera balls; Heyl discusses the metamorphosis of masks in 17th- and 18th-century London. Additionally, Belkin explores cross-dressing as masquerade in Jewish folk theater, emphasizing the male actors who play both male and female characters in the *Purimspiel*, based on the story of Queen Esther; and Bellof focuses on photographic representations of beauty in and behind lesbian masks.

The essay that best encompasses the themes mentioned in the subtitle of the book – gender, sexuality, and marginality – is an analysis of Neil Jordan’s 1991 film *The Crying Game*. The authors (van Lenning, Maas, and Leeks) beautifully explicate the interwoven relationships among Dil, Fergus, and Jude. Further, the authors reach the Lacanian conclusion that the relationship between Dil (a biological male of female gender) and Fergus (a heterosexual male) is ‘*hom(m)osexual* [. . . , i.e.,] not homosexuality at all, but heterosexuality perfected’ (p. 98). In an essay on stigma, uncertain identity, and disguise, Davies claims that ‘[t]here can be no answer to the question “Are we what we are or merely the sum of the ways in which we present ourselves to the world?” The interesting problem, rather, is why there are differences in the way people in different social locations would answer such a question. . . .’ (pp. 50–1). And since all the essays in the collection discuss their topics from a performative perspective, Tseëlon hopes to ‘reserve the liberty to theorise creatively [. . .] not merely reproducing poststructuralist piety’ (p. 154). In other words, even though all the authors share similar theoretical orientations, they might not all agree on how to ‘define’ identity and masquerade.

This book adds to our knowledge of identity and performance theory by exploring ‘deviant’ identities through masking and masquerading. Even though the final essay is the only one that approximates a linguistic exploration of women’s discourse, scholars who are interested primarily in linguistic discourse would perhaps find this book useful. But for those interested in visual, cultural, and social discourses, this book would certainly prove beneficial and informative, particularly for applying theories of gender and theories of sexuality.

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