

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

ADELIN MASQUELIER (Ed.) *Dirt, Undress and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005, x + 256 p., index.

At present, society places great emphasis on the continuous shift towards identity projection vis-a-vis fashion and options for bodily dress. Scholars acknowledge this phenomenon by examining the factors which influence the act(s) of dressing such as increasing markets for mass consumption and instantaneous access to disposable incomes. Alternatively, scholars also express a concern via issues of undress as they occupy just as pertinent a role in the identity politics debate as does forms of bodily adornment. Both forms of (un)dress are important components of the identity formation process and are increasingly affected by variables such as: gender, age, generation, socioeconomic status, and political issues like post-colonial influences.

*Dirt, Undress and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface*, edited by Adeline Masquelier, is a solid text grounded within an interdisciplinary framework examining the post-colonial body, identity politics and the implications of such influences on undress. This edited collection utilizes ethnographic and historical accounts in analyzing issues of dirt, undress, nakedness and difference through nine case studies including: Bali, Nigeria, nineteenth-century Japan, the United States, Iran, Niger, Sudan, India, and finally, Botswana. Throughout the edited collection, Masquelier seeks to examine the role of colonial authority in the social construction and/or sanctioning of what it means to be "dirty," "dressed," and "undressed."

In the introduction, Masquelier outlines the historical context of undress. Masquelier addresses the need for scholarly concern on issues of undress and skillfully introduces the case studies of the volume. Moreover, the case studies are extremely thorough in addressing three important themes which unify the collections of essays. First, the volume undertakes a critical exploration of the manipulation of the body's surface as a form of strategic contestation, liminality, and empowerment (5). In this way, the body is seen paradoxically, as the "self" and "social" occupy both inclusive and exclusive entities allowing for a unique position of moral, social, and cultural contestation regarding issues of (un)dress (5). Second, the edited collection examines what it means to be "dirty," "nude" or "modest" at the micro level of those actually engaged in the process. This particular approach challenges scholars' preconceived notions regarding undress and

dirt to examine why particular individuals engage in these process(es) (i.e., gender, sexuality, post-colonial forces, etc). The third and final theme of the volume is to provide a re-analysis of the previously un-researched implications of dress, filth, pollution, nakedness, and nudity at both the micro and macro levels.

The text is divided into nine chapters. The first two chapters examine the impacts of colonization and tourism on social and cultural belief systems of dress and undress. Misty Bastian explores the various connotations associated with selective nakedness for the Igbo-speaking people in Nigeria. Margaret Wiener's study, on the other hand, addresses the Western tourist image of bare-breasted women in Bali during the 1920s and highlights the role of the "tourist gaze" (63-65) and the idealization of Balinese culture. The third chapter examines the interaction process surrounding the construction and/or appropriateness of nudity in modern American strip clubs. Katherine Frank provides a unique analysis whereby she argues that larger patriarchal mandates regarding appropriate levels of nudity (i.e., full nudity versus the strip club norm of never being completely "nude" because the performers are wearing jewelry and accessories) and acceptable levels of eroticism actually control the stripping industry.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the volume address political battles over the body's surface by revealing implications at local, national, and international levels. The fourth chapter, written by Adeline Masquelier, explores the ritual ceremonies of bori. Masquelier analyzes the role of clothing as a vehicle of protest against the emerging Islamic ideologies regarding territorial control over women's bodies. In a similar case study, Satsuki Kawano analyzes body modesty in nineteenth-century Japan in the state's campaign to clothe citizens via the "Misdemeanor Law." Kawano argues that Japanese citizens' contestation of the law played a dominant role in shaping the social acceptance of types of undress, dress, and the now eroticized image of the nude female body.

The final four chapters address the role of cleanliness and purity with regards to bodily presentation. In the sixth chapter, Janice Boddy analyzes the role of cleanliness in Sudan during the late 19th and early 20th century. To this end, Boddy recognizes the role of gender, bodily transgressions, religion and culture as part and parcel of the moral climate surrounding socially appropriate use(s) of the body's surface. Deborah Durham's chapter, on the other hand, explores the Herero of Botswana and the art of bathing. According to Durham, the introduction of soap leads to bathing taking on a bureaucratic role as it becomes a tool of the global economic structure. Thus soap's purposeful role (i.e., civic responsibility and cleanliness) becomes less and less mitigating over time. West Bengal provides the setting for the case study by Sarah Lamb as she investigates women's bodily purity. Lamb acknowledges that not all women engage in the cycle of maintaining a "pure" sense of self. In this way, the chapter highlights the continuous maintenance and renegotiation of identity in terms of politics of gender, social appropriateness, constitution of moral

boundaries, and mild transgressions of bodily norms. In the final chapter, Janet Bauer considers the role of Iranian women in protecting their virtuous sense of self. More specifically, Bauer isolates the difficulty in presenting a sense of self which is pious and congruent with their belief system yet, at the same time, part of the larger social structure. Overall, the book offers convincing insight into the cross-cultural acts of undress by explicating how particular social and cultural forces affect decisions of bodily (dis)adornment.

While the cross-cultural ethnographies and historical accounts are informative, I would be remiss not to mention a criticism of the text. The ambiguity regarding the abundance of scholarly attention on issues of dress is problematic. While scholars in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies have theorized about issues of dress and bodily adornment, very few empirical studies actually exist. This is a crucial point of omission, as its exclusion gives the reader the impression that research in the area of dress is copious. Masquelier's omission does not, however, diminish the value of her or her contributors' insights as this book makes an important contribution to the existing literature on the body and/or body politics.

I value Masquelier's text as a significant contribution to research surrounding issues of (un)dress and body politics. Masquelier's cross-cultural perspective on forms of (un)dress is successful as she is able to provide an edited collection of case studies detailing why issues of undress are just as important as those surrounding dress. However, in order to fully appreciate the complexity of the text, familiarity with the body and/or identity literatures is required. As a result, this book is ideally suited for those interested in the anthropology and sociology of the body, social construction of identities, identity politics, and issues of embodiment.

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