

Edited by Natasha A. Kelly

# UN\_MASKING DIFFERENCE

Literary Voices from  
Behind the Mask



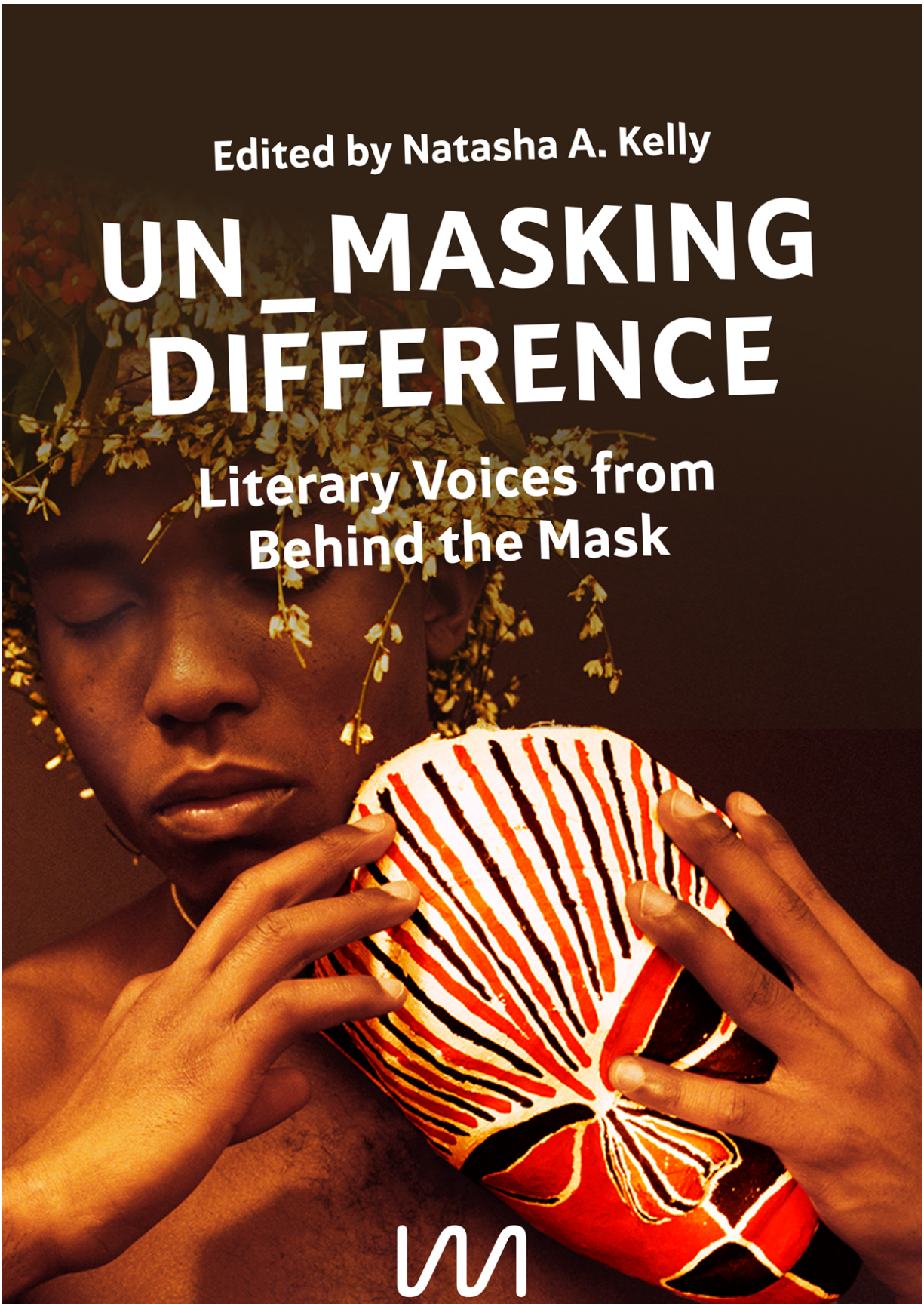
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## Summary

For the second time in history, masks have become the symbol of a global pandemic. The facial front lines differ in shape and size and are fashioned to the users' desires, reaching from African prints to floral patterns. But are masks solely 'germ-shields' or 'dirt-traps' as referred to a century ago? What does the choice of fabric actually reveal about its wearer? And in which way are differences 'un\_masked'?

Authors, academics and activists from different backgrounds share their ideas on the historical, political, religious, racial and cultural, as well as on the intersectional dimension of masks. Similar to W.E.B. Du Bois metaphor of 'the veil', which solely exists in people's minds, masks can be seen as the physical manifestation of the inner and outer world, the speakable and the unspoken.

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**UN\_MASKING DIFFERENCE**

**Literary Voices from Behind the Mask**

With texts by Logan February, Precious Colette Kemishiga, Olumide Popoola, Djamila Ribeiro,  
Jeferson Tenório, Sheree Renée Thomas

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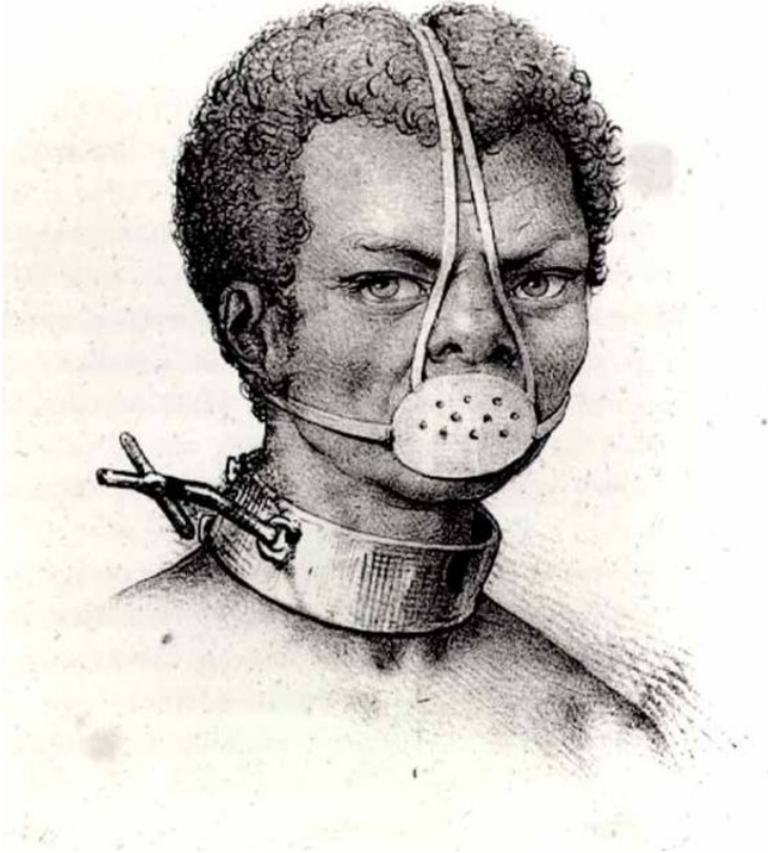
# **Un\_Masking Difference**

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## Editor's Note



Escrava Anastacia, by Jacques Arago, 1839

For the second time in history, masks have become the multifaceted symbol of a global pandemic. The facial front lines differ in shape and size and are fashioned to the users' desires, reaching from African prints to floral patterns. But are masks solely 'germ-shields' or 'dirt-traps' as referred to a century ago? What does the choice of fabric actually reveal about its wearer? And under which circumstances do masks enable people to breathe or do they lead to suffocation, as argued by the New Right?

Originating from the last words of Eric Garner, an unarmed Black man killed by the police in 2014, and associated with a number of other homicides by the police, including that of George Floyd in May 2020, the slogan "I can't breathe" has become the catchphrase used by Black people