



Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia

Michael Edward Stanfield

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All societies around the world and through time value beauty highly. Tracing the evolutions of the Colombian standards of beauty since 1845, Michael Edward Stanfield explores their significance to and symbiotic relationship with violence and inequality in the country. Arguing that beauty holds not only social power but also economic and political power, he positions it as a pacific and inclusive influence in a country “ripped apart by violence, private armies, seizures of land, and abuse of governmental authority, one hoping that female beauty could save it from the ravages of the male beast.” One specific means of obscuring those harsh realities is the beauty pageant, of which Colombia has over 300 per year. Stanfield investigates the ways in which these pageants reveal the effects of European modernity and notions of ethnicity on Colombian women, and how beauty for Colombians has become an external representation of order and morality that can counter the pathological effects of violence, inequality, and exclusion in their country.

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