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ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE

BEAUTY



The Diversity of Beauty

I remember so vividly the first time someone called me “gordita.” It was while I traveled on a clumsily converted cattle boat pitching in the waves from Cuba to Canada in 1970. I was seasick all the time. Yet I remember the emotion of shock at that word more than I recall how I felt about my sickness. Of course, I know now that the Cuban who called me “gordita” meant “my little pleasantly plump friend” and probably wanted to console me. I heard “fatty.” I cried.

Ironically, I’ve always felt a bit more in home in Latin America than in the United States because I’m five feet tall and well, maybe, a little pleasantly plump. So when Álvaro Jarrin and I started to put together this issue of beauty, I was perhaps just a little bit surprised about how many people wanted to change things about themselves: their noses, breasts, muscles, skin color, hair, weight and even ethnicity. I was not alone.

I cheered when Alicia Machado, a former Miss Universe and telenovela actress, fought back when now-President Donald Trump insulted her about her weight—and battled again when the candidate did it again via Twitter. That would certainly lose him the election, I thought.

If North Americans are held to an impossible beauty standards, Latin Americans are often served a double whammy, since their standards are often determined by the tall blonde North American ones. And just as I’ll never be tall and skinny, Latin American forms of beauty are certainly their own—a fact that is increasingly recognized and celebrated.

Of course, Latin America is known for its beauty contests and famously stunning actresses—think Sofia Vergara, Sonia Braga, Salma Hayek and Dolores del Río. And those beauty contests and movie roles helped shaped standards and images other than the skinny blonde.

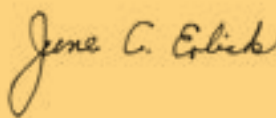
Beauty is a fact of everyday life in Latin America, from the manicures (for both men and women), the stylish clothes (I often wondered how Colombian university students could make jeans seem so very elegant), and the infinite varieties of hair care. A recent article in *The New York Times* recounted that a local singer in Northeast Brazil subsidized trips to the beauty parlor for parents of Zika babies, intended as a source of comfort for stressed mothers.

Beauty is business, goods and services that urge people to keep on purchasing. Yet the quest for some idealized type of beauty is not just a matter of vanity or even identity for many Latin Americans; it’s a ticket to a better job, a hope for higher class status or an investment in a beauty contest or, more unfortunately, a position in the drug trade.

Not too long ago in Bucaramanga, Colombia, a school nurse fretted to me that a lot of her poorest students were refusing to eat (she didn’t use the word “anorexia”) because they hoped to be chosen for a reality show and make a lot of money.

The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics, showing how Latin Americans have been shaped by concepts of beauty and, in turn, have shaped those concepts. Beauty often implies conformity, but as you will see in these pages, it is also resistance. It is the power of an indigenous beauty queen who speaks out against massacres. It is the dignity of the elegantly dressed cholitas who remind us that beauty is not just skinny and white. It is the effort of those held in clandestine jail cells to maintain their humanness through fashion shows.

I’ve long been fascinated by the subject of beauty in Latin America, yet it took the knowledge, inspiration, collaboration and dogged work of Álvaro Jarrin, a professor at Holy Cross College who specializes in beauty-related topics, for the two of us to create this issue of *ReVista*. A special thanks to you, Álvaro, for making this *ReVista* what it is!



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ON THE COVER

BEAUTY

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FIRST TAKE

The Politics of Beauty

By ALVARO JARRIN



PHOTO BY YAYO LÓPEZ/OJOS PROPIOS/ILAS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT IN LIMA HISTORICAL CENTER, 1993

WHEN ONE TALKS TO PEOPLE IN LATIN AMERICA about beauty, it is never simply about vanity, self-care or individual consumption. Beauty in Latin America always seems to have larger implications, inducing hopes for upward mobility, invoking national ideals of beauty, or even suggesting beauty as a standard for citizenship. To observers of Latin America, beauty can tell us much about this region's ongoing inequalities and the way the body's attractiveness, or lack of it, acquires sociopolitical meanings.

Let me begin, however, with the story of Solange, whom I met at the reception area of a public hospital in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Solange (I'm not using her real name to protect confidentiality)

In Latin America, beauty has so much meaning to women because it is a bodily sign that condenses the race, class and gender inequalities they deal with on a daily basis, a “dictatorship of beauty” that determines which bodies have value and which bodies do not.

was there to see if her nose job would be finally approved by the medical team that oversaw plastic surgery procedures. She told me that having a different nose was a dream of hers since she was a teenager, but until recently she had believed plastic surgery was a luxury only the wealthy could afford. A few months ago, however, she had been encouraged to seek out this hospital by two friends of hers who also worked in retail. Those two friends had been able to get approval for a free breast lift and a free tummy tuck, fully covered by the universal healthcare system, and

were delighted with the results. Although Solange realized that she would have to go through many hoops, and she would be one more name on a very long waiting list,

she was willing to endure any sacrifices. Echoing the poet Vinicius de Moraes, she said that “beauty is fundamental,” but she added a very practical reason for its





Left: Mariquita Palma Nonones, el Guayabo, Ica, Peru, 2016. Right: Bertha Javier Durand, Huancayo, Junin, Peru, 2016.

importance, “in this country, one needs a good appearance to find good jobs.” It did not bother her, she assured me, that she would be studied by the medical residents who carried out surgeries at this hospital, because it represented her small contribution towards making Brazilian plastic surgery “number one in the world.” With her new, slimmer nose, Solange claimed, she would suffer less discrimination while seeking work, and

she might be able to find a better job than retail sales, which paid very little.

When Solange’s name was called, she allowed me to witness the consultation she had with a young plastic surgeon, still completing his medical residency. She handed over an envelope with the results of a tomography this doctor had requested during a previous visit, and which confirmed that Solange had a very slightly deviated septum, which did not

obstruct her respiratory airways. The surgeon told Solange that the tomography results by themselves were not enough evidence to justify the surgery, but if she consistently complained of difficulty breathing through her nose, he could get her an expedited approval—her story had to remain consistent when she booked a time for the surgery, and when she checked in at the hospital. A little while later the surgeon explained to me



Left: Alicia Huamán Quisani, Chinchero, Cuzco, Peru, 2016; Right: Elizabeth Ramos Durand, Huaró, Cuzco, Peru, 2016.

that Brazil's universal healthcare system would only cover plastic surgeries that addressed a demonstrated health need, but aesthetic surgeries were routinely approved by relabeling them as medically necessary reconstructive surgeries. If the hospital administrators were aware of this informal practice, they turned a blind eye to it, because they knew it was important for patients who desired beauty and for medical residents who needed to learn

to perform the aesthetic surgeries that were valuable in private medical practice. Solange's case was valuable to him because it would allow him to learn how to do corrective surgery on what he described as a "negroid nose," a condition that he said was typical among the racially-mixed Brazilian population.

In Brazil, the interests of low-income patients and surgeons-in-training intersect on the operating table in the

pursuit of beauty. When one talks to patients and to surgeons, however, two different explanations emerge for why beauty matters. Low-income patients like Solange invariably invoke "good appearance" as central to any hope of upward mobility in society—beauty is imagined as providing new job opportunities, opening doors that were formerly closed, and guaranteeing, in general, that a person will be treated



Left: Doña Ursula, Ursula Ventura Chapoñan, Mórrope, Lambayeque, Peru, 2015; Right: Jhaine Huamán Pulquín, La Jalca Grande, Amazonas, Peru, 2015.

fairly in society. The concern for beauty allows these patients to complain about the many ways they feel Brazilian society treats people differently based on their appearance—beauty’s blessings seem to simply be bestowed on the rich, but are denied to those with wider noses, those with ugly teeth, those women whose labor as mothers take a toll on their bodies, or those workers whose bodies are marked by the long hours spent per day

in grueling jobs. In Brazil, as in general in Latin America, beauty has so much meaning to women because it is a bodily sign that condenses the race, class and gender inequalities they deal with on a daily basis, a “dictatorship of beauty” that determines which bodies have value and which bodies do not. Plastic surgery seems an acceptable risk in comparison to the abject threat of ugliness.

For plastic surgeons, on the other hand,

their discipline has a larger, loftier goal of improving the Brazilian population. The plastic surgeons I interviewed in Brazil believe beauty standards to be universal, to be objectively verifiable, and to have meaning not only for individuals but for the nation as a whole. They imagine their surgical prowess as able to fix the “mistakes” caused by too much racial mixture in Brazil, and they exalt women with clear European ancestry,



Left: Lizbeth Quizpe, Chinchero, Cuzco, Peru, 2016; Right: Luanda del Carmen Palma Ballumbrosio. El Carmen, Ica, Peru, 2016.

like the supermodel Gisele Bündchen, as beauty ideals for all Brazilian women. The desire for whiteness expressed by plastic surgeons is not accidental—plastic surgery has a long history in Brazil, and was first celebrated as a medical tool by Brazilian eugenicists like Renato Kehl, who in the early 20th century equated beautification with hygiene, imagining a future in which racial difference and ugliness would be eradicated from the

Brazilian population. It was this eugenic legacy within plastic surgery that allowed the most famous plastic surgeon in Brazil, Ivo Pitanguy, to argue that the poor should also be granted the gift of beauty, and to gain state backing to expand access to plastic surgery within public hospitals. A more beautiful citizenry, the logic went, would be rid of its more ugly, criminal elements, and plastic surgeons would heal the wounds of urban violence through

surgery.

I expand on this theme in my forthcoming book, *The Biopolitics of Beauty*, but my purpose here in contrasting the surgeons' medical discourse to patients' understandings of beauty is to showcase the manifold, overlapping meanings of beauty within the Latin American landscape. While dominant discourses about beauty in Latin America tend to reassert the region's



The tension, between a rigid beauty and an unruly beauty, and the messy grey areas in between, is what makes studying beauty in Latin America such a complex but fascinating endeavor.

race, class and gender hierarchies, especially those backed by the knowledge of “experts” like plastic surgeons, the on-the-ground experiences of what is beautiful or attractive are always more unruly and more complex, because they are shaped by popular culture and local, immediate understandings of beauty. The very same plastic surgery, such as Solange’s nose job, can be simultaneously described as a form of empowerment and disempowerment, because it gives Solange a reason to fight her experience of racial discrimination in the job market, but also allows her plastic surgeon to reassert that “negroid noses” are by definition inferior and in need of surgical correction. This tension, between a rigid beauty and an unruly beauty, and the messy grey areas in between, is what makes studying beauty in Latin America such a complex but fascinating endeavor.

Beauty is a political project in Brazil, and I would argue it is a political project in all of Latin America. The body’s aesthetic value becomes the battleground upon which citizenship is crafted. The modeling, advertising and beauty pageant industries, for instance, have long reproduced unrealistic standards of beauty in Latin America that do not reflect the region’s diversity—pick up any fashion magazine or look at any television ad or televised beauty pageant anywhere in Latin America, and it is light-skinned men and women who dominate those spaces, while indigenous and black features remain conspicuously absent. In Brazil, modeling scouts specifically hunt for new talents in the regions of the country that were populated by German and Polish immigrants, assuming white beauty is inherently superior and “sells” products locally and abroad. It takes work

to keep those aesthetic hierarchies in place, and they do not remain unchallenged. The Afro-Brazilian movement has increasingly made efforts to push for more diversity in the modeling and advertising industries, demanding that black bodies be recognized as beautiful beyond the sexualized stereotype of the mulatta. Indigenous beauty pageants all over the region attempt to recognize not only a different bodily aesthetic but also a new form of belonging in the nation that does not erase their indigenous values or require assimilation into a mestizo majority. Transgender beauty practices in Latin America open up spaces for non-gender normative bodies to claim recognition within highly transphobic societies. Beauty is not simply skin deep, but is rather a more profound negotiation of the boundary between those who can claim to be ideal citizens and those who are still regarded as second-class citizens.

The articles in this issue of *ReVista* will address the myriad meanings of beauty in several Latin American countries, and will tackle a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to beauty pageants, plastic surgery, masculinity, afro-aesthetics, trans beauty practices, the cosmetic industry, eating disorders and the political meanings of fat. June Carolyn Erlick and I sought contributors that were attuned to the ways that race, gender, class and nation are intertwined in the production and performance of beauty, and which understood beauty as a window into larger political and social processes. Beauty has only recently become a scholarly object of inquiry in Latin American studies, and the topic is fertile for more than one issue, but we hope that this collection begins an important conversation regarding why, as Vinicius de Moraes and Solange claimed, beauty is fundamental.

Alvaro Jarrín is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at College of the Holy Cross. His research focuses on Brazilian medicine and its relationship to sociopolitical understandings of the body. His book, The Biopolitics of Beauty, will be published this summer.

BODY IMAGE AND THE BUSINESS OF BEAUTY



Geoffrey Jones [Globalizing Latin American Beauty](#) • Lucrecia Ramírez Restrepo [The Culture of Skinniness](#)
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Globalizing Latin American Beauty

The Making of a Giant Business **By GEOFFREY JONES**

BEAUTY SEEMS TO MATTER A LOT IN LATIN America. Whenever I arrive in the region I am struck by the disproportionate number of attractive and stylish women and men who seem to be just walking around. I am always even more taken aback by airport bookstalls crammed with magazines devoted to plastic surgery and the celebration of all things beautiful. And then there are the countless posters and billboards advertising beauty accessible to all.

There is plenty of less anecdotal evidence too that beauty is big business. According to the industry database Euromonitor, Brazil is now the fourth biggest market for beauty products in the world, after the United States, China and Japan. Mexico was ranked seventh and Argentina sixteenth.

Even more telling is per capita spending. Brazilian spending on beauty products is \$148 on an average for each Brazilian, the highest amount in Latin America. That of Argentina and Chile is just a few dollars less. Although individual Americans and Europeans spend more, Latin Americans stand out among emerging markets as spenders on beauty. Thais, South Africans and Russians spend well under half the amount of Argentines, Brazilians and Chileans. Chinese spend three-quarters less. Indians spend less than one percent than people do in these three Latin American countries.

It is not just lipstick, fragrance and other cosmetic products. Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Argentina regularly feature in the top ten countries for cosmetic plastic surgery, alongside stalwarts such as the United States and South Korea. Brazil, which offers a tax reduction for such surgery, is a world leader in breast implants and liposuction. Latin Americans are associated with a range of beauty enhancements, from the “Brazilian wax” to “jeans Colombianos.”

The whiteness of the emergent Latin American beauty culture was evident in beauty contests, in which pale skins were exclusively featured.



In the popular media, the apparent Latin American fascination with beauty is regularly ascribed to culture. Latin sensuousness, cults of body worship in tropical climates, and machismo expectations about female appearance are regularly mentioned. The conservative and religious nature of much of Latin American society rarely gets a mention, however. History points to more complex, and contingent, explanations.

Let me begin with the obvious: Latin America was not the home of the modern beauty industry, nor of plastic surgery. As I explained in my book on the history of the global beauty industry, *Beauty*

Imagined, every known human society in history has used beauty products. Human preferences for adornment and cosmetics were in part shaped by religious beliefs and prevailing medical knowledge. More fundamentally, consumption was probably driven by biological desires to attract and reproduce. Throughout history, beauty products were made in people's homes, or in small batches by craftsmen. Most people had neither time nor money to devote to beauty. Beauty was also a local matter—standards of beauty varied enormously among geographies, as well as over time.

The advent of modern industry and modern marketing in the 19th century changed everything. Beauty became a business. Skin creams, cosmetics and perfumes began to be made in factories. Chemistry replaced natural ingredients. Advances in understanding the chemistry of scent enabled the creation of synthetic fragrances, transforming the ancient perfume industry in the process. Entrepreneurs created brands. They came up with attractive packaging. They secured endorsements from celebrities. Emotional associations were built around products which had once been functional. Brands offered hope in a jar.

The modern industry was born in the rich industrialized world of Western Europe and the United States. As it grew it incorporated the values and norms of those societies. Beauty became associated with Western appearances with Paris and New York as aspirational global beauty capitals. The features of white people were hailed as the global standard of beauty, and others were considered ugly. In the United States, when beauty contests like Miss America started in the interwar years, African-Americans (and other ethnicities like Jews) were excluded. Beauty was gendered also. Reflecting hardening gender identities in the 19th century, beauty products became associated with women rather than men,

which was never the case historically.

The modern beauty industry, along with its underlying ideological assumptions, was brought to Latin America by European and U.S. firms. Only a handful of urban dwellers had incomes and lifestyles sufficient to buy such imported brands. Nineteenth-century prudery and association of cosmetics with immorality also restricted markets. However affluent Buenos Aires, whose citizens famously imagined themselves as located in Europe, became a magnet for French fragrance and cosmetic houses before World War I.

In most of Latin America, however, low incomes and prevailing ethics meant that toilet soap and toothpaste, not color cosmetics, were the first products U.S. and European firms introduced to the region. Unilever, based in Britain and the Netherlands, began making toilet soap in São Paulo in Brazil in 1930, and the business began selling toothpaste in 1939.

Western multinationals made markets and created consumer desires—they did not respond to a pent-up demand for cosmetic adornment. Marketing strategies were skillfully adjusted to local conditions. In Brazil women seldom read newspapers, the traditional medium used elsewhere by Unilever for advertising. So the firm switched to the more popular medium of radios. Latin American women were enticed with the opportunity to emulate the latest beauty fashions of the United States and Europe. American and European models were used in advertisements by the big cosmetics companies such as Max Factor. However, as Julio Moreno from the University of San Francisco has shown, Ponds cream was advertised using Mexican celebrities during the 1930s, while Colgate-Palmolive, Unilever's U.S. twin, featured famous Mexican singers such as the Aguilar Sisters on its weekly radio program.

It was Colgate-Palmolive which pioneered the radionovela concept in interwar Cuba, drawing on its promotion of the so-called soap opera



radio serials in the United States. It proved an effective tool to grow the market for toiletries in Latin America. The same firm sponsored the first radionovela in Brazil in 1941. The advent of television during the 1950s provided a new medium. A pioneering Mexican telenovela, which became such a distinctive Latin American cultural genre, came in 1958, when Televisa's Canal 4 showed the Colgate-Palmolive-sponsored *Senda prohibida*.

As everywhere, U.S. and European firms only celebrated white beauty. The whiteness of the emergent Latin American beauty culture was evident in beauty contests, in which pale skins were exclusively featured. The first national Brazilian beauty contest was held in 1921, only three weeks after the first Miss America, though it was judged entirely on the basis of photographs. The second contest in 1929 appointed a Miss Brazil to represent the country at a Miss Universe contest held in Texas that year, and the final round included taking the state winners through Rio de Janeiro streets, before being judged in Brazil's largest stadium. The participants and winners were all white. The winner in the first contest had an Italian father.

The privileging of whiteness was the norm of the global beauty industry, but it aligned well with the deep-seated racism throughout Latin America, as well as specific historical trends of the time. There was much discussion about the nature of the Brazilian national identity during the interwar years. The social elite aspired to raise the country's international status by demonstrating its progress, and that it was becoming more European, defined as ethnically white. The judges in the 1929 contest included university professors, journalists and politicians, and it was chaired by the president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters.

For a long time, Latin Americans remained modest consumers of beauty. Using corporate archives, I have been able to guesstimate the historical size of the industry. In 1950 the world industry was worth about \$10 billion in today's

dollars—compared to \$ 426 billion today. The United States was half the entire world market. Brazil was a mere three percent, although surprisingly this was already half the amount of the richer countries of Britain and France.

The real growth of the beauty market came later in the 20th century. Multinational companies drove market growth. U.S. and European companies devoted increasing attention to Latin America. The region had high tariff barriers, but most countries allowed foreign firms to manufacture and sell locally. This was in big contrast to most of Asia and Africa, where multinational firms were unwelcome, or entirely blocked as in Communist China.

The giants of the U.S. cosmetic industry, whose marketing and advertising expertise had built a huge domestic market, spread over the subcontinent. Revlon opened its first foreign factory in Mexico in 1948. The German hair care company Wella started manufacturing in Chile in 1952, Brazil in 1954, Argentina in 1957, and in Mexico in 1961.

The most important corporate actor was Avon, the company which pioneered direct selling of cosmetics in the United States. In 1954, Avon, whose only previous international operation had been in Canada, opened a new manufacturing business in Puerto Rico. Over the following decade manufacturing and selling operations were started in Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico and Brazil. Direct selling was perfect for Latin America. In most countries, there were few department stores and only fragmented retail channels. Direct selling by sales representatives enabled Avon to reach women in their workplaces and homes.

By 1960 Avon had secured strong market positions in many countries, including Venezuela, where it controlled half of the cosmetics market. Even today nearly one-third of all beauty sales in Latin America are made through direct sales, compared to five percent in Western Europe and less than ten percent in North

America. An estimated eighty percent of lipstick sales in Brazil are made by direct selling.

Avon was enormously skilled at enticing people to buy cosmetics. When it entered a new market, it began with acquainting representatives and customers with the Avon line. It provided representatives with

the desirable products at good prices, so providing them with an attractive earning opportunity. It tailored its strategy to local circumstances. It invested heavily in cosmetics education in countries such as Venezuela, which at the time used few cosmetics. In Brazil, as historian Shawn Moura has shown, Avon responded to prevailing gender norms which disapproved of women working outside the home with a campaign to portray direct selling as a respectable activity akin to marriage. It also created a new accounting system in response to escalating inflation rates during the 1960s. Avon took a lead in using ethnicities with a range of skin tones in its advertisements. In the United States, the firm was a pioneer in using African-Americans in advertisements from 1966 onwards, though it was not until 1970 that the first Afro-Latinos appeared in advertisements in Brazil. Avon did, however, recruit darker skinned Brazilians as sales representatives much earlier.

Latin Americans were educated and enticed to buy cosmetics, then, by firms which had honed their skills in marketing and business operations in advanced economies. They evidently found willing consumers, but this was at least as much

owing to the region's high levels of income and ethnic inequality than to alleged body cultures or Latin sensuousness. As incomes rose, growing numbers of urban middle class, overwhelmingly white rather than indigenous or Afro-Latino, had money to spend on consumer products beyond essentials. Beauty products were not big ticket items; they delivered instant pleasure; and they were closely associated with the aspirational glamor and economic success of the United States and Europe, to which so many urban Latin Americans were attracted.

Over time, as the beauty business became established, it also acquired a life of its own. Beauty salons and institutes flourished. The beauty industry, although rightly condemned



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by feminists and others for imposing restrictive ideals of beauty on women and making them constantly dissatisfied, was also a means out of poverty for many Latin American women. They could earn extra income as direct sales representatives or by manicuring nails in tiny salons. Meanwhile winning a beauty contest became the equivalent to winning the lottery. Beauty pageants became big business. As television came to the sub-continent, they attracted good audiences, so television companies invested in promoting them. The Pomona College historian Miguel Tinker-Salas has linked the advent of Venezuela's large beauty industry to the growth of the Cisneros business group, the owner of the Venevision channel, from the 1980s.

The self-reinforcing nature of the beauty industry is evident in Venezuela, whose citizens became frequent winners of international beauty contests. Avon and Venevision may have created the industry, but over time a whole infrastructure developed to prepare young women for contests through enhancing their appearances, often through surgery or hormones, public speaking skills, and much else. Venezuelan plastic surgeons became world experts in a procedure known as Boom Boom, which injected a woman's own fat into her buttocks to make them bigger. The chances of appearing, and succeeding, in television reality shows were said to have driven young women to steal to pay for operations. The rewards for winners were dazzling, for careers opened up for them as models and television presenters, and even occasionally in politics.

The fact that the postwar beauty

industry came to serve as one avenue for women to enter the workforce and earn incomes was not the only paradox in the Latin American industry. In some respects, the industry became as associated with wellness as with cosmetic adornment.

The levels of cosmetic plastic surgery seen today in the region may justifiably be seen as obsessive, as well as frequently dangerous because of the large informal and illegal component of that industry, but the origins were more benign. Ivo Pitanguy, the founder of the Brazilian industry, earned the respect of his fellow citizens by providing his skills free of charge to victims of a disaster when a huge circus tent burned hundreds of spectators in the city of Niteroi in 1961. Pitanguy was a passionate believer in trying to counter "the stigma of deformity." Although he built a well-renowned celebrity business, over the following decades he continued to offer his staff and services free of charge to less well-off patients one day a week.

Quite a number of the locally owned cosmetics firms which began to appear in the region had an early and persistent commitment to sustainability, health and societal concerns. An early example was in Colombia. Labfarve laboratories was founded in 1971 by Jorge Piñeros Corpas, a prominent Colombian doctor and scientist, who initially sought to make more affordable medicines for the poorer sections of society using plants and traditional practices, sourcing ingredients from the peoples of the Amazon. The company soon diversified into cosmetics and has made multiple innovations, including developing a natural Botox from an extract of the acmella plant. The wider Corpas Group now includes a hospital and

a medical school.

Brazil in particular saw a cluster of local beauty companies formed with health and sustainability concerns. O Boticário was founded in 1977 by Bolivian-born Miguel Krigsner as a small pharmacy in the city of Curitiba in the state of Paraná. Krigsner's vision was to provide a pleasant environment where people felt good about themselves. The original shop had a carpeted room with seating and coffee for those who wanted to wait while their prescriptions were made up. Krigsner quickly got into cosmetics. In 1979 he opened his brand's first exclusive shop at Curitiba airport, selling perfume and cosmetics. Within a few years, the small pharmacy had grown to into a big business with 4,000 franchised shops in Brazil targeting the upper-middle segments of the market through eco-friendly products. In 1990, the firm established a non-profit organization to preserve the natural environment.

Social and environmental responsibility was a principal concern of what became the largest Latin American beauty company. Natura was established in 1969 by Antonio Luiz da Cunha Seabra as a small laboratory and cosmetics store in the city of São Paulo. The company adopted a direct selling model in 1974. Guilherme Leal and Pedro Passos later joined the business, forming an unusual three-man leadership, which the company asserted represented its soul, mind and body.

Natura's direct selling business was a beneficiary of the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s, as many retailers collapsed, while Natura was able to recruit thousands of female sales representatives who needed a source of income. By 2005, when the firm went public with an IPO, it had revenues of \$1.5 billion and employed 480,000 sales consultants throughout the country. By 2017 it had 1.6 billion consultants in Brazil.

Seabra and his colleagues were at the forefront of social and environmental responsibility. In contrast to the perceived stereotypes of Brazilian body-worshipping, Natura criticized exploitative advertising and exaggerated promises. In 1992 the company launched the concept of "The

"Truly Beautiful Woman" which asserted that beauty was not a matter of age but of self-esteem. This was more than a decade before Unilever's much-hyped Dove campaign which featured pictures of seniors, larger women and other unconventional beauty models.

Natura was also concerned with the use of sustainable methods and ingredients. In 2000 the company launched the Ekos brand, made from Brazilian biodiversity products in a sustainable way. In 2007 it was a founding member of the non-profit Union for Ethical Bio-Trade. Leal, one of the partners, was personally prominent in the Brazilian section of the World Wildlife Fund, and even stood as the Green Party vice-presidential candidate in Marina Silva's unsuccessful campaign in 2010. In 2014 the firm became the largest (by then it had sales of \$2.6 billion), and first publicly traded company, to obtain B Corp certification, designed to encourage the highest standards of environmental and social stewardship and transparency in business.

Latin America was not preordained by a stereotyped culture to be a temple of beauty. The industry grew at a specific time, and was shaped in a specific way by corporate actors. Its impact was as contradictory as the region itself. It imposed restrictive notions of beauty on generations of women, almost certainly intensified rather than challenged racism, and created cultures in which breast implants and buttocks injections were the societal norm. It peddled unrealistic dreams. Yet it was also an industry which provided income to hundreds of thousands of people, primarily women. And it provided the setting for some of the region's (and indeed the world's) most socially and environmentally progressive companies to flourish.

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The Culture of Skinniness.

Skinny, Pretty...and Happy?": Combating Anorexia and Bulimia in Medellín.

By LUCRECIA RAMÍREZ RESTREPO

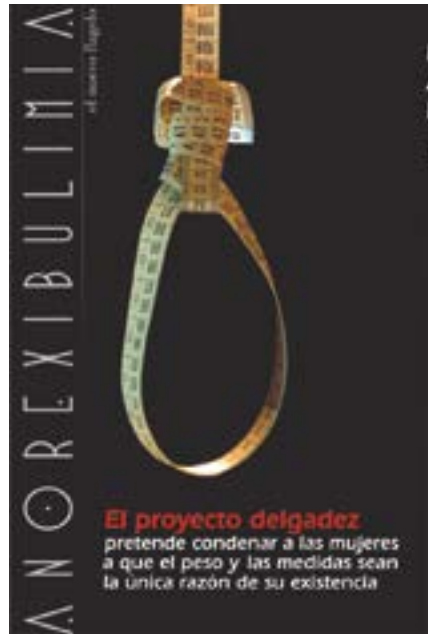
ROSARIO IS 21 YEARS OLD AND A PERFECT SIZE 6.

A fifth-semester student in international business in Medellín, Colombia, she's often thought of herself as fat. It all started when she was a child, and her parents encouraged her to lose weight the healthy way—through diet, exercise and good nutrition—so she wouldn't become overweight as an adult since the tendency ran in her family.

But those paths didn't seem to work for her. As she approached her teens, she hated her body; she would measure her waist, arms and hips after each and every shower. She finally discovered vomiting—which we know more technically as bulimia. Then came diet pills and laxatives. When she turned sixteen, she convinced her parents to finance liposuction and breast enlargement. But it was a constant battle to maintain her weight: two hours daily of exercise, pills and starvation. A classmate died of what some said was anorexia—self-induced starvation. But despite the shadow of a possibly dangerous eating disorder, Rosario kept up her regimen to keep her figure—to please her family and boyfriend and to compete with classmates.

Rosario is a composite figure of the young women we see on a daily basis at our outpatient psychiatric clinic in Medellín. Body image is not just a passing concern of adolescents: it affects women (and to a much lesser degree, men) in terms of self-worth, relationships, sexuality, human development and even productivity. It's not just that Rosario invested time and money in staying very thin; that's time and energy she could have spent on her studies and personal enrichment.

The pressures generally come from three sources: mass media, parents and schoolmates. It wasn't always this way. During the 1980s and until the mid-90s, cases of anorexia and bulimia at our clinic—attached to the prestigious University



of Antioquia (Hospital San Vincent de Paul)—were considered “exotic.” Two factors came into play: drug trafficking and the development of Medellín as a fashion center, both of which fostered the ideal of extreme thinness, but at the same time sexiness and fitness.

The irruption of narcotrafficking at the beginning of the '80s in Medellín meant a very deep and traumatic political, social and cultural change and fracture in our society. Drug kings sought to express their “new power” by buying whatever they wanted: in particular, beautiful women, in the style of the voluptuous Pamela Anderson and the like, associated with the American beauty of those times. Women were exhibited as trophies. A little later, one of the projects that the Medellín establishment came up with was the presentation of the city as the Milan of Latin America, creating a Fashion Show and three fairs that featured beauty along the lines of a Eu-

ropean concept of beauty with very skinny models. All these fashion-related events exerted much pressure over the city's women. Many felt the need to combine thinness and voluptuousity, as well as fitness—an impossible task from the perspective of health. Women found it necessary to use extreme practices as starvation, exercise until exhaustion, laxatives and plastic surgery.

As the number of cases raised dramatically, the city began a project for the prevention of Eating Disorders known as “Skinny, Pretty...and Happy?” in 1997. This program focused on gender equity and the development of economic, social and cultural rights of women as a way of struggling against objectification and dependence on physical appearance.

The program began in the Women's Mental Health Academic Group in the Psychiatric Department at the University of Antioquia, and in the government of the civic movement Compromiso Ciudadano led by Mayor Sergio Fajardo (2004-2007). The program was incorporated in the programmatic line “women's development,” which brought together civil society organizations.

The entire intervention had three stages: first with comprehension of the problem (1999-2003), then with implementation of the program (2004-2007), and finally with extensive evaluation (2008).

In order to understand the scope of the problem, two studies looked at the issue, the first one in 1999, in which almost 1,000 high school girls from five elite schools were enrolled in workshops, conversation programs with parents, and lectures. The University of Antioquia study found that 77 percent of the girls were horrified at the idea of gaining weight; 41 percent indulged in binge eating; 33 percent felt guilty after eating; 16 percent felt that food controlled their lives; 8 percent reported self-induced

vomiting. The school study sounded the alarm about the severity of eating disorders in Medellín, but it certainly wasn't a representative study because it included only the schools that had called to participate.

A second, more comprehensive study in 2003 using a representative sample of adolescent students, found that in Medellín, 33 percent of them were at increased risk for eating disorders. The study found that the risk was not related to how wealthy or poor the girls were or type of school, public or private, mixed or feminine. The prevalence of the illness estimated those at high risk to be 31 percent. That compared with 5 percent in Spain and 10.2 percent in the United States at the time. The study also confirmed the previously described risk factors as bullying or teasing about weight issues, previous obesity or obesity in the family, and negative comments (sometimes well-intentioned) by friends or family members about body appearance.

Then, the program used three main strategies, to go beyond direct work with adolescents. The idea was to make the environment more friendly to diverse body types and stopping the promotion of the ideal of skinniness.

First, a continuous two-year public health campaign used television, radio, newspapers and ads plastered on billboards in the city (roads, metro stations, bus stops) to denounce the skinniness culture. Catchy images showed strange-looking "skinny" elephants, rhinos and zebras, with the caption, "It looks weird, right?...and you, how do you look?" Later, in the phase of social awareness, the text of the billboard warned, "Hey! Be careful!, The skinniness culture has fomented anorexia and bulimia, a socially contagious illness." Later, in the resistance phase, captions declared, "Even if the skinniness culture is powerful, there is no such power greater than the resistance capacity of society."

In addition, the educational sector conducted 273 workshops in 425 high schools, which worked with 3,294 adult men and women (teachers and parents) through 569 institutional projects they design and implemented, to develop new concepts of femininity, female beauty, women's con-



temporary capacities and what it means for a 21st-century woman to be accepted in society.

Finally, a citizens' network for social responsibility was created from health institutions, universities, gyms, schools, local television and print media, dance academies, modeling agencies and artists, to make them aware of the role they might play in fomenting (or preventing) eating disorders and introduce structural changes in their own businesses in order to contribute to decrease the social pressure on the idea that women have to be skinny to be desirable, recognized and happy.

The project, for example, resulted in a rule that models had to undergo a nutritional evaluation before they could participate in the 2007 fashion fair *Colombiamoda*. The Institute for Exports and Fashion (*Inexmoda*) developed the regulations with the support of the network of eating disorder activists. Since these fashion icons provide role models for teenagers, the institute banned models with extremely low body mass index (BMI, the proportion of fat to height and weight). This rule—an act of social responsibility—represented a powerful acknowledgment that fashion plays a significant part in establishing what is beautiful. In the sector of fitness clubs, *Bodytech*, a national chain, eliminated all photos of abnormally thin women, substituting more normal and diverse women as a sign of a socially responsible attitude for women's life and wellbeing.

Things are changing slowly, as a careful data-based monitoring process of the project in 2008 indicated. Adolescents are now developing an evolving concept of femininity. Women are less frequently perceived just as objects for others' pleasure

or appreciation and more in the context of self-worth. There's an emphasis placed on kindness and self-development, as well as beauty. But that's far from suggesting that the problem has gone away.

Femininity is still closely associated with beauty, so now you'll hear phrases like "I want to be a great professional, but not give up being feminine in the process" or "I want to be my own person, but also to be seen as beautiful by others." In addition, women still see appearance as a key to getting a good job or getting ahead in general. Today, in the 21st century, despite all the interventions and progress, the culture is giving its (young) women this message: "It doesn't matter how intelligent, capable, honest, hard-working, collaborative, compassionate, attentive and diligent you are...if you are not pretty, you're worthless....whatever effort you put into being beautiful is justified because in this way we guarantee your inclusion, recognition and opportunities."

Beauty continues to be seen as thinness. Interviews with adolescents reveal a lack of consensus about the marketing of skinniness. Some observe they have role models in fashion or television who are far from thin; they even observe that pleasantly plump is becoming fashionable. But many others insist that social pressure makes them want to be thin at any cost.

This variety of opinions is a little bit of progress. The model of prevention of eating disorders developed by the city of Medellín was innovative because it starts with the premise that these disturbances are profoundly rooted in the ideas societies hold about women. In the end, after ten years of combating the thin beauty ideal, the rates of developing eating disorders have dropped when social pressures over women's body appearance has been reduced. There's hope for breaking the concept of "thin is beautiful, and the thinner, the better, and beauty leads to happiness."

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Should I Eat the Chocolate Cake?

Weight and Body Image in Latin American Women's Texts

By RENÉE S. SCOTT

WHEN PEOPLE LEARN THAT I RESEARCH THE representation of food and weight in Latin American women's literature, they frequently ask me two questions.

The first question is how I became interested in such an untraditional topic. The answer goes back to the year 2000, when I was evaluating texts for an anthology on Uruguayan women's

literature (*Escritoras uruguayas: una antología crítica*, 2002), I came across the short story "Inmensamente Eunice" (Immensely Eunice, 1999) by Andrea Blanqué. The story is about a fat, single woman. We read about Eunice's challenging job search, because potential employers don't like her size, and also about her satisfying romantic relationship

with a blind man. One day her lover announces that he plans to seek a cure for his blindness. Afraid that once he recovers his sight, he will be horrified by her large body, Eunice embarks on various diets to lose weight. She is successful. At the conclusion of the story, the man does in fact recover his sight, but in an ironic twist, rejects her new, thin body,



and thus she loses the affection of the only man who ever truly paid attention to her. Blanqué's text intrigued me, and I began to wonder whether there were other texts that dealt with contemporary society's obsession with the slender body.

As Naomi Wolf proposes so eloquently in *The Beauty Myth* (1991), the relentless emphasis on women's physical appearance can trap them in an endless cycle of insecurity, and self-hatred of their own bodies, regardless of all the professional and personal progress that has been achieved since the women's liberation movement. Even though the use of food and women's weight in Latin American fictional texts as a tool to criticize the cultural emphasis on thinness is a relative new occurrence, the topic of food being used to express gender concerns is certainly not new. As early as the 17th-century Mexican writer Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz uses food, and cooking, as an expressive device to convey the social,

economic and intellectual oppression that patriarchal society imposes on women in her "Respuesta a Sor Filotea" (Reply to Sor Philotea, 1691). More recently, since the 1980s, authors such as Mexican Laura Esquivel, in her famous 1989 novel *Como agua para chocolate* [*Like Water for Chocolate*], present the kitchen as a self-empowering site, where women develop alliances with each other and freely express their own subjectivity. Nevertheless, as I found out in my search, texts that specifically address food and weight emerge only in the 1990s. A younger generation of female authors has now turned its attention to the exclusion and marginalization of the heavier woman, criticizing in its texts current notions of beauty, and proposing a feminine identity on their own terms. Several writers explore bulimia as well, attesting to more recent social interest in eating disorders. Thus far, as I posit in *What is Eating Latin American Writers?*

(2009), most of the fiction works on women's weight and eating disorders in Latin America have been written in Argentina and Mexico, although a few come from Chile, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Uruguay. The fact that the majority are from Argentina and Mexico is not surprising, considering their large populations and their active feminist scenes (organizations, magazines, etc.). Also, in examining Mexico, we need to consider the influence of its neighbor, the United States, which has its own highly feminist sensibilities. Interestingly enough, the majority of these texts have yet to be translated into English, or even recognized outside the countries where they were published, for that matter.

The second question I am often asked is if there is even an issue with weight in Latin America. "Don't Latin American men like their women meaty?" is the common refrain. This question is much more complicated to answer than the

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first. The term *gordita* (fatty) is indeed an endearment that men commonly use to address their wives, girlfriends and sisters, suggesting a more accepting attitude towards women's body size. In her study of fatness in Caribbean culture and literature, "Así me gustas gordita" (I like you plump, 2005), Emily Branden points out that Latin American men indeed do appreciate a more voluptuous female body. However, the fat they love is concentrated in specific parts of the body, specifically large breasts, wide hips, and curved rears. And in the study on fatness acceptance, "Que gordita: A Study of Weight Among Women in a Puerto Rican Community," Emily Massara finds that women think they have a weight-appropriate body if they retain a visible waistline and also associate weight with fertility and well-being; but Massara's findings are only based on the responses of a group of Puerto Rican immigrants living in the Philadelphia area. It is clear, from reading Latin American magazines and watching television, that the beauty image consistently promoted in these outlets is that of a young, thin woman. The only exception seems to be the archetypal mother, grandmother or trusted maid in the soap operas, given acceptance as fat and lovable. It is worth noting that the 2011 seminar in Miami "Soy hermosa, libre de preocupaciones relacionadas con la comida y mi cuerpo" (I am pretty, free of worries related to food and my body) brought together experts from Colombia, Venezuela, El Salvador and the United States to discuss weight issues and the sharp increase in eating disorders in



their countries. Nine out of ten sufferers of bulimia and anorexia are women, and the Colombian expert commented that in the city of Medellín, for example, where many young girls aspire to be models, 17% of them suffer from some kind of eating disorder.

Women today face a cruel conundrum. On the one hand, they are still expected to be the principal providers of nourishment for their families; therefore, they must stay close to food. On the other hand, they are under constant pressure to manage their weight in order to be "presentable" and conform to the physical silhouette promulgated by the media and gender industries.

Generational differences appear in the ways various Latin American authors approach female size issues. Older writers (born in the 1940s and 1950s, before the social gains of the women's liberation movement) tend to display a conflictive attitude towards appearance and weight, even as they overtly make a distinctive attempt to accept their bodies as they are. Younger authors (born in the 1960s and later), are more likely to reject social norms regarding women's size. Consider

the aforementioned *Como agua para chocolate*, a text that popularized food discourse in Latin America. Set on a ranch on the Mexican-U.S. border during the Mexican Revolution, the book—a combination of narrative and cooking recipes—tells the doomed love story of Tita de la Garza and Pedro Muzquiz, who cannot marry because according to a family tradition, Tita, as the youngest daughter, must remain single to take care of her aging mother. Pedro marries her older sister Rosaura to stay close to Tita, and she utilizes the book's cooking recipes to prepare delicious and sensual dishes to retain Pedro's love. Although the novel vindicates a woman's role in the kitchen, the representation of its female characters reflects dominant cultural prejudices. Tita is revealed as a woman of strikingly youthful freshness and arresting proportions: "her breasts moved freely, since she never wore a brassiere, while her sister Rosaura is so fat and grotesque that Pedro would rather sleep in another bedroom than with her." Clearly, Esquivel's objective is to accentuate poetic justice by contrasting the beautiful heroine who is forced to relinquish the man she loves with the anti-heroine who marries him. And yet, the notion that only the young and slender body is attractive to men contrasts drastically with her attempt to put forth a feminist narrative.

Afrodita (Aphrodite, 1999), by bestselling author Isabel Allende, is a light and humorous book of personal anecdotes, literary texts and cooking recipes that exhorts women to abandon their inhibitions and pursue the pleasures of the flesh. Nevertheless, multiple negative references regarding weight, which go hand in hand with mass culture messages, do not conform to the book's initial liberated proposal. Allende repeatedly laments not being able to enjoy the delicious desserts she includes in the book because she does not want to gain weight. She confesses that she bought sexy lingerie "to veil [her] cellulite," and even though she believes that licking chocolate mousse off a lover's skin is highly sensual,



A younger generation of female authors has now turned its attention to the exclusion and marginalization of the heavier woman, criticizing in its texts current notions of beauty, and proposing a feminine identity on their own terms.

she advises against it because the mousse contains too many calories. Thus, just like Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*, *Afrodita* reflects a feminist consciousness by presenting cooking as an element that empowers women, but at the same time recirculates negative attitudes about weight that comport with the current masculinist-driven obsession with the thin female body.

Authors born since the 1960s, however, forcefully argue against a society that diminishes and marginalizes the large body instead of focusing on resolving more pressing social and economic problems, such as family dysfunction and poverty. For example, the short story "Inmensamente Eunice," which originally piqued my interest in issues of food and weight, presents an intelligent and active protagonist, contradicting the notion that

overweight people are stupid and lazy. The numerous descriptions of her—the "gigantic breasts," her "massive bed"—renders visibility to the fat body ignored by society by giving it a space in the text. Just as fascinating is the male character, who by being literally blind is to be free from the social gaze, and therefore can appreciate the protagonist's body, transforming her into the erotic being that society states she cannot be.

In another take, Puerto Rican Mayra Santos Febres likewise criticizes society's obsession with the female body in her essays and fictional texts. Her short story "Un día cualquiera en la vida de Couto Seducción" (A regular day in the life of Couto Seducción, 1998) pokes fun at current paradigms of female beauty by presenting an obese male protagonist, who as his name suggests, is sexually irresistible.

The story is told from the perspective of one of his thirteen lovers, who anxiously gather every month to partake in Coutos's "insatiable and infinite body" that will sexually satisfy all of them. Hence, in this sagacious story, the gazed upon—normally the woman—becomes the gazer. Completely contradicting contemporary norms, the protagonist's large body is the very reason for his irresistible sexuality. The story also reiterates the prevailing double standard for women and men when it comes to weight. Blanqué's and Santos Febres' texts reflect the growing interest among Latin American authors to address the existing fixation with slimness, and to suggest that body size is an individual matter that should be decided by women themselves, liberated from media and social manipulations.

Literary critic Nelly Richard encourages Latin American women to create texts that are thematically and stylistically different from the "hegemonic discourse utilized to dissimulate the masculine contract that legitimizes its appropriation of culture" ("De la literatura de mujeres a la textualidad femenina," 1994). These short stories fall into the category of texts favored by Richard and also show a progression among the younger group of writers, toward texts that contest cultural norms of how women should look. It will be interesting to see how Latin American authors in the future continue to advance the discourse on body weight to represent women's social reality and assert their agency. Personally, I welcome any discourse that entertains and challenges oppressive social conventions of female physicality. Let's keep in mind that ultimately it is a woman's prerogative to define what beauty means to her and what kind of body she wants. She can have the cake and eat it too.

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Beauty Weighs in Argentina

When Looks Can Kill By MELISSA MALDONADO-SALCEDO



Mural paying homage to Argentine rock features a voluptuous woman.

ARGENTINES BELIEVE THAT “SUCCESS” COMES from luck and not as much from hard work and efforts, according to a recent survey conducted by the University of Palermo. This may work to the disadvantage of some women when their social and economic status is determined in part by their looks. The obsessive emphasis on looks threatens the safety of women as well. Violence against women within Argentina is a growing epidemic, and this reality devastates women, often silencing them (BBC News 2015). The objectification of women is a factor in this barbaric reality that continues to worsen under the current administration, which is headed by a man who publicly confessed to cat-calling women. While mobilizations against femicide call for not one more life to be lost to this public health crisis, the line between beauty and sickness continues to blur. In fact, when a survey revealed that more than half of the women in Buenos Aires felt that the unsolicited verbal taunting made them feel unsafe on the streets, the former Mayor of Buenos Aires dismissed these concerns and went as far as to accuse these same women of “lying.” According to him and other men, women deep down believe that cat calls are the highest form of “flattery.”

Women are often convinced that their life chances and choices dwindle rapidly over time. They are constantly reminded in

popular culture that men like their women like they like their cars, “a younger and newer model is always preferable.” Between the loud ticks of their biological clock and the wear and tears caused by life, there is an overwhelming anxiety to appear youthful and sexy (desirable.) This in part explains why the beauty industry appears to be recession proof because and despite Argentina’s economic decline. In Buenos Aires, the hottest commodity remains the appearance of youth, because it can lead to a wealth of opportunities and possibilities if you fit the (right) bill. In this context, to strategically invest in a woman’s most profitable attribute, “her body,” not only is time consuming but it is also beyond oppressive. It can suck the life right out of you.

The perils of aging are acculturated into young boys and girls as soon as they learn the popular children’s song, “Manuelita” by Argentine cultural icon Maria Elena Walsh. As the story goes, Manuelita left the Province of Argentina and went to Paris after she noticed her wrinkled reflection in a puddle. She fell in love with a turtle who was passing by and wondered what to do, since he reasonably could not return her love. She thought that she appeared too old (for him.) She pondered, “...in Europe and with patience,” she could be made beautiful (again.) At the Parisian drycleaners,

Manuelita’s creases got ironed out, they gave her a wig, and put boots on her feet. However, because she longed to return to her beloved turtle and town of Pehuajo, en-route, while crossing the sea, she became wrinkled once more. Manuelita’s luck ran out. She could no longer defy age (time.)

The stress on youth and beauty reflects in advertisements that (still) read, “We solicit a waitress with good presence.” Yet, what amounts to “good presence” remains inextricable from the Eurocentric beauty ideals within *Porteño* culture. The further away you are from the Capital’s center, the more likely you are to feel disenfranchised by these standards along with the rituals which celebrate them. For example, in 2014, the legislature in the City of Chivilcoy located within the Provinces of Buenos Aires, adopted a resolution to ban beauty pageants from its municipal festivals. In an article by Simon Romero, the *New York Times* reported that since Argentina has some of the “world’s highest rates of eating disorders among women” and since it is obsessed with “unattainable ideals of perfection,” these spectacles promote unhealthy behaviors and attitudes (December 22, 2014). Due to the country’s “uncompromising” beauty expectations, the local legislature resolved within its statutes that, “Beauty is not something that can be objectified... Organizing a competitive scenario of this kind creates a discriminatory and violent situation” for women that reverberates throughout public and private life.

BEAUTY PAYS: YOU WANT ME YOUNG

“There is nothing more beautiful than the beauty of women, right? It’s almost the reason that men breathe.”

-Argentine President Mauricio Macri.
quoted by Tara Brady, Daily Mail, 2014.

Seated at a café in the trendy neighborhood of Caballito, I overheard the manager say to

the barista that he was not going to hire the lady who responded to the job ad on the door because she was too old. I called my husband to fret, “She could not have been older than I am.” I then decided to stop by my friend Sebastian’s salon to dye my hair blonde and do away with all traces of gray. This pressing urge to stall the inevitable was not only costly—it was work. I saw my neighbor pass by me while walking her dog, wearing a T-shirt that read “Forever21.” To some, this is merely a brand but to others, it is a life goal. In Argentina, it is (always) beauty before age.

Later in the day, I noticed a mural of Eva Perón. “Evita” embodied the beauty and luck most celebrated within Argentine culture. Her gambit from an aspiring actress from the Pampas could to the First Lady of Argentina was impressive. Evita accomplished this feat by appealing to traditional (patriarchal) values. While most Argentines (especially those of the working class) can speak of her accomplishments and list what she achieved for women’s rights, it is her blonde bun and youthful smile that the world remembers.

Evita’s face has become as iconic as that of the face of the revolutionary Che Guevara; and accordingly, both are displayed on buildings and printed on T-shirts, flags, and underwear alike. Due to her untimely death, Evita remains, “forever young” within the public imaginary. Her husband Juan Domingo Perón had her body embalmed so that she could appear as if she were a sleeping (beauty.) Fellow populist Cristina Fernández de Kirchner often evoked Evita stating that she laid the conditions that made her presidency possible. Beauty can even turn a privileged *Porteña* into a European Queen, as when Máxima Zorreguieta Cerruti, an Argentine, became Queen Maxima of the Netherlands. My friend Lena tells her daughter, “Why dream of being a princess, when you can really become a Queen?”

In 2014, the *Atlantic* ran a story about beauty standards entitled, “What Beauty Looks Like, from Argentina to Vietnam.” In it, Megan Garber shares the story of Esther Honig who sent graphic designers from around the world an untouched photo of herself. She requested that they, “make me look beautiful.” Using Photoshop, they

adapted her appearance in accordance to the local standards of beauty. In Argentina, the culture’s preference for magnificently polished women was put into focus; Honig resembled a mannequin.

One night, as we ate sandwiches around the table with my family, my mother-in-law asked her niece to tell me about much weight she lost since the last time I saw her. In that moment, I lost my appetite because there is nothing more unsavory than reaching for seconds as someone praises weight loss over your shoulder. I also knew that she had dropped out of school and instead put breast implants on layaway. Whenever she drank one too many, she would grab her breasts and exclaimed, “Cristina [Kirchner] got me these.” Indeed, Argentina had programs that subsidized plastic surgery and mental health. I tried my best to look intrigued but I realized, it would take another glass of wine.

BEAUTY HURTS: YOU WANT ME DEAD

Sonia Pérez died after injecting Vaseline into her chest attempting a do-it-yourself breast augmentation. The headline “self-obsessed Argentine” flashed onto the screen. The reporter also noted that Pérez had recently suffered third-degree burns while sunbathing. When my friend Sebastian commented that Pérez was sick, I retorted how “sick” could she be within the context of a culture that places an extraordinary high premium on aesthetics because of patriarchy, heteronormativity and neoliberal capitalism. She was a symptom. The sordid relationship among these social determinants engenders all types of pathologies and structural challenges for “feminine embodiment.”

I explained to Sebastian that Perez’s extreme measures to achieve breast augmentation was misguided but not completely outside of the scope of the countless extremes measures women can undertake to “fit into” the prevailing and painful cultural norms of what is thought to be beautiful. Sebastian’s conclusions started to upset me, “Women should care about how they look, that is what a good woman does.” He unapologetically reminded me, “Don’t think men don’t do the same to

conform to society’s standards.” I rolled my eyes and he shot back at me, “Did you know that men in Argentina are now injecting Vaseline into their penises?”

In *Missing Bodies: The Politics of Visibility* (New York University Press, 2009), Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut remind us that bodies need to conform to these impossible standards and ideals, because, “as citizens of larger social bodies (the communities and institutions our bodies populate), we are responsible for keeping our bodies functioning in the pursuit of national goals and economic agendas.”

BEAUTY CONTROLS: YOU DISRUPT ME

It usually takes me a few days to get acclimated whenever I return to Buenos Aires because the culture shock can be disorienting. For example, when someone calls you “*gorda*” (fat), it is a term of endearment. I cringe a little whenever I am greeted with it. “*Negra*” (black) can also be affectionate but insulting. “*Flaca*” (skinny) is just as ubiquitously used between friends. I thought, can what Argentina celebrates as beauty look, sound, and feel...ugly?

Sitting at the ice-cream parlor in front of our apartment, I saw a little girl sobbing. The juxtaposition of tears being wiped away while she licked her one scoop of ice cream was sobering and uncomfortably familiar. Her father told her that she could not have an extra scoop, while her brother was permitted to choose two flavors (scoops). Her mother consoled her and whispered loud enough for me to hear, “You cry now, but tomorrow when you cannot fit into what all the other girls in your class wear, you will cry even more.” The little girl exclaimed to her father, “This is not fair!” I looked over at my son and contemplated, how would he be treated if he were a girl?

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BEAUTY IN TIMES OF REPRESSION



Betsy Konefal [Maya Queens at the Microphone](#) • Barbara Sutton [Beauty in Places of Horror](#)

Michael Stanfield [Beasts and Beauty in Colombia](#)

MAYAN QUEENS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RODRIGO ABD





THESE PICTURES WERE TAKEN Friday, July 29, 2011. The women pose for the pictures during the Rabin Ajau National Folkloric Festival in Cobán, Guatemala. Unlike traditional beauty contests, during the Rabin Ajau, or Queen Daughter, the panel of judges not only value the participants' leadership skills, but their commitment to the rescue and maintenance of Mayan values. The contestants, whose ages range from 14-26 years, go through numerous rounds of competition, including a speech that must be given in their native dialect and Spanish.

Top row, left to right: **1.** Mayan Queen **Matilde Teresa Bol Maas**, 16, representing Lanquin, Alta Verapaz, **2.** Mayan Queen **Rafaela Ermelinda Gomez Ichel**, 18, representing Olinstepeque, Quetzaltenango **3.** Mayan Queen **Ana Esperanza Gutierrez Chuni**, 16, representing Palin, Escuintla **4.** Mayan Queen **Teresa Gonzales**, 18, Ixtetela. Middle row left to right: **5.** Mayan Queen **Juana Choc Tzop**, 18, representing Zona Reina, Quiché **6.** Mayan Queen **Magdalena Quinilla Batz**, 15, representing Canilla, Quiché **7.** Mayan Queen **Matilde Evelyn Ivonne Tzunec Bixcul**, 19, representing Sololá, Sololá. **8.** Mayan Queen **Natalia Rosmely Panjoj Saquic**, 20, representing Santo Tomas Chichicastenango, Quiché. Bottom Row left to right: **9.** Mayan Queen **Veronica Leticia Mejia Baten**, 15, representing San Pedro Jocopilas, Quiché **10.** **Elsy Natividad Sac Tzaj**, 20, representing Nahuala, Sololá. **11.** Mayan Queen **Elvy Yolanda Feliciano Ramirez**, 16. **12.** Mayan Queen **Maria Magdalena Lucas Lopez**, 21, representing San Pedro Soloma, Huehuetenango.

Maya Queens at the Microphone

Speaking Out in a Time of Repression **By BETSY KONEFAL**

I WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN THERE TO WATCH the performance of Fidelina Tux Chub, a young and seemingly fearless contestant for indigenous queen—*reina indígena*—in the highland Guatemalan town of Carchá in June 1978. She had entered the auditorium walking solemnly toward the stage, not dancing the *son* as required. And then explained why.

A crowd of mostly Q'eqchi'-Mayas had gathered in the municipal auditorium that evening, an enthusiastic audience. Carchá's *reina indígena* pageant resembled contests all over the highlands in the 1970s, and was quite distinct from the ubiquitous beauty pageants for ladina (non-Indian) queens in these same communities. Racially separate indigenous pageants unfolded alongside annual ladina beauty contests. Festive and popular, *reina indígena* pageants focused on indigenous community identity and traditions rather than Western definitions of beauty, with young Maya contestants displaying local understandings of "authenticity" and Maya difference through their clothing, actions and words. Winners could go on to regional pageants, or even the national competition for Rabin Ahau (now spelled Rabin Ajaw), where a young Maya woman representing Guatemalan indigeneity was crowned each year as part of the national Folklore Festival, again wholly separate from the Miss Guatemala beauty pageant.

The indigenous queen pageants, held in a similar fashion today, followed a standard format: the indigenous queen contestants, dressed in the most traditional clothing they could acquire, would be asked to approach the stage dancing the traditional Maya *son*, often carrying a basket loaded with local delicacies. When the contestant had to address the audience, she would try to speak eloquently in both her indigenous language and in Spanish, using flowery imagery to celebrate the Maya past, and often calling for respect and an end to

discrimination in the Maya present. In a few places, spectators could vote for their favorite contestants. In most settings—including Carchá—juries of prominent ladino community leaders or folklorists would determine which young woman that year best represented local Maya "authenticity."

The timing and location of the Carchá contest in 1978 help explain what Fidelina had to say. The town is located in the department of Alta Verapaz, the land of "true peace" that just days before had been the site of one of the Guatemalan army's first large-scale massacres of Maya civilians, in the community of Panzós. In that politically charged context, the massacre shaped the pageant for indigenous queen. Fidelina's attitude helps us understand the hopes and horrors of a political moment and movement that would soon be silenced by genocide.

PANZÓS, ALTA VERAPAZ, MAY 29, 1978

Panzós, a lowland community about eighty miles east of Carchá, was home to Q'eqchi' Mayas long engaged in struggles with wealthy ladino landowners. The May 1978 massacre stands out historically not because it was unique (many, many massacres would follow in the next several years) but because of the tremendous outcry the episode engendered against army atrocities and the targeting of Mayas.

The facts of the case are well documented: on behalf of area landowners, the mayor of Panzós summoned army troops to the community in late May 1978 amid rising tensions with area Q'eqchi' campesinos. At the same time, the mayor's office reportedly called in campesino leaders to discuss their concerns. Hundreds of Q'eqchi's—men, women and children—arrived in the central plaza, while soldiers took up positions around the plaza and on rooftops. It's unclear what exactly sparked

the violence, but we do know that soldiers opened fire onto a plaza filled with families carrying only work machetes. Forensic anthropologists recovered the bodies of 35 victims of the massacre from a clandestine grave in 1997. At the time of the killings, it was believed that soldiers had massacred even more Q'eqchi's in the plaza and pursued survivors into the surrounding hills and river.

Coverage of the Panzós massacre galvanized mass public protest. It was also a pivotal moment for Maya opposition movements, as Panzós proved to many that the military state was targeting not just guerrilla insurgents, but the *pueblo maya* more broadly. Counterinsurgency thinking that equated "Maya" and "subversive" paved the way for the genocide to come.

CARCHÁ, ALTA VERAPAZ, JUNE 9, 1978

The indigenous queen pageant took place just eleven days after the massacre in Panzós. So when Fidelina took the microphone, she told her audience:

Ladies and Gentlemen, ... I am here with sadness. You will have noticed that I didn't enter dancing, because our pueblo is living a tragedy.... I couldn't be happily dancing, knowing that my brothers are crying for their loved ones who have shed their innocent blood....

Fidelina's speech might have echoed through the auditorium—surprising and pleasing some of her audience, angering others—and then faded away, lost like so much of Guatemala's history of resistance. But because she used a popular queen pageant to make her case—and because she was not alone in this effort—we have newspaper coverage of the event and the text of her speech itself, which was transcribed and published in a church magazine. I found the speech in a parish



Guatemalan newspapers report on beauty queen's denouncing of massacres, Bottom: Modern-day activists paint signs denouncing the genocide. A history of resistance is "not nostalgia it's the memory of possibility."

archive, but I soon saw another copy hanging in her living room when I went to Carchá to meet her. While I waited for Fidelina I chatted with her teenage son, and he told me that the framed article was something his mom seemed to cherish. For nearly 25 years she had kept it, and no matter how many times it was knocked off the wall by a ball or some accident, she always repaired the glass and put it back in its place, he told me.

Tux Chub's 1978 speech reflects a combination of influences: a progressive Christianity that challenged injustice, a growing sense of Maya identity and resistance that was locally based, but extended beyond community borders. "Why am I sad?," Fidelina had asked her listeners in the auditorium and on the local radio. It was a rhetorical question. As the young queen contestant put it, everybody already knew the answer:

Why am I sad? You all know why, and it is because of what our Christian brothers of Panzós just experienced. You know they have been killed, and we don't know why. It could be because they, too, are indigenous, or it could be because they are poor....

From the pageant stage, Tux Chub called for everyone to mourn the deaths in Panzós, but also to acknowledge the difficult realities that necessitated social organizing and land activism. Though moments before she had wondered aloud about the reasons for the massacre—it *could be because they are indigenous, or it could be because they are poor*—she answered her own question unequivocally: the army murdered Q'eqchi' campesinos for their land activism:

They don't have a piece of earth to live on and it's for that that they are asserting their right over what truly belongs to them, ... their lands; and it is for that that they have been killed...

you've heard the news on all the radios ... read [about] this tragedy in all the papers, now we all know....

Then Fidelina brought the events of Panzós even closer to home for her listeners: "today they [in Panzós] are living [this tragedy], and tomorrow it could be us, *verdad?*" From the pageant stage, the young woman asked the audience for a moment of silence in honor of the Panzós dead.

Fidelina did not become queen. The ladino jury of the contest responded to Tux Chub's performance by disqualifying her from the contest, pointing to the fact that she hadn't done the required dance. She believed it was because of her message about the massacre (interview July 29, 2002), and a newspaper headline suggested the same: "They disqualified a *reina* candidate for requesting a minute of silence for the victims of Panzós" (*Prensa Libre*, June 10, 1978. That newspaper also noted that the jury seemed displeased with her comments, but that the audience applauded enthusiastically). After the contest Tux Chub went into hiding for several days, but then returned home. For reasons we



Lidia Aguiar Castro, 23, Mayan Queen representing Santa Lucia La Reforma, Totonicapan, during the Rabin Ajau National Folkloric Festival in Coban, Guatemala.

can only guess (*paternalistic assumptions about young Maya queens?, pageant spaces assumed to be non-political?*), the forces of repression chose to ignore the outspoken young *reina* candidate from Carchá.

RESISTANCE AND GENOCIDE

It turns out that in 1978 vocal young Maya pageant contestants denounced the Panzós massacre in other towns, too, even

mounting a coordinated *reina indígena* boycott of the national Folklore Festival's celebrated Rabin Ahau competition that year. On the front page of the newspaper *El Gráfico*, nine queens and their supporters expressed outrage at army violence, and insisted that only a hypocritical state could celebrate folklore while murdering indigenous campesinos. They demanded the cancellation of the festival "while the

wound of Panzós still bleeds." Holding it, they asserted, "demonstrates ... the degree of disrespect [they have] for the lives of us, *los indios*." They expressed their own understanding of authenticity, very much at odds with that of the folklorists': the symbolic *reinas indígenas* and their murdered campesino brothers in Panzós shared an identity as "genuine Guatemalan Indians," *verdaderos indios guatemaltecos*.

It was a powerful and exceedingly brave statement to make on the front page of a national newspaper at that time, and people involved in it remember the audacity of that act. Their protest had no apparent effect on the Folklore Festival, which proceeded as usual, but the story did survive and became an important clue for me as I pieced together the puzzle of 1970s indigenous organizing. Carrying copies of the newspaper photo, I went knocking on doors all over Guatemala, finding out what I could about the women and men in it and connected to it. The search revealed a vast network of oppositional organizing in highland Guatemala: pageant queens and supporters turned out to be teachers and students, catechists, peasant leaders and revolutionaries linked to opposition movements of every stripe. I learned that for them, it was a time of tremendous hope and engagement, something that surprised me because that history of possibility has been so fully overshadowed by the horrors that followed.

POST-PANZÓS

The devastating figures of the armed conflict are all too familiar: 200,000 dead, 83% of them Maya; one in eight displaced; more than six hundred communities burned to the ground. Twenty years after the government and guerrilla armies signed peace accords, teams of archivists continue to pour over documents recovered in the National Police files and leaked from the Guatemalan military. Forensic anthropologists painstakingly piece together bones from clandestine cemeteries to identify massacre victims and establish causes of death.

But all of this death and destruction happened alongside those histories we

know much less about—efforts to oppose and resist a violent state, stories of the hopes and goals of generations of Guatemalans who worked for something different. One of the most crucial determinations about the Guatemalan conflict was the CEH truth commission finding that the state committed “acts of genocide” in *certain areas* of the Maya highlands. It wasn’t an ethnic conflict in blanket terms. Instead, the CEH found that the army evaluated place-specific political histories to pinpoint areas where Mayas were “historically rebellious” and therefore—by the army’s reasoning—“natural support bases” for the insurgency. As geographers Elizabeth Oglesby and Amy Ross put it, “The army was not simply killing Mayans; it was killing Mayans in particular places where social organizing was most intense” (*Space and Polity*, April 2009).

In the aftermath of extreme violence in Guatemala, the public seemed to require an apolitical victim. Guatemalans downplayed histories of resistance, as if activism itself were somehow to blame for genocide. But the tide seems to be shifting in interesting ways. There’s a different kind of remembering at work in Guatemala these days, one that is reinterpreting histories of activism and opposition like that of Fidelina, and looking to those histories for clues to a more just future. An organization called HIJOS, founded by children of the dead and disappeared, is leading the way, writing resistance and oppositional discourse back into public memory and Guatemala’s narrative about the war.

As HIJOS scrawled on a city building, resurrecting a history of resistance is “not nostalgia it’s the memory of possibility.”

That’s so good it ought to be in a queen’s speech.

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Remembering women in places of horror in Argentina.

Beauty in Places of Horror

Testimonies of Women Survivors of Clandestine Detention Centers in Argentina

By BARBARA SUTTON

BEAUTY IS THE LAST WORD THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN thinking about the state-run torture centers that proliferated under authoritarian regimes in Latin America during the 1970s and 80s. In Argentina, members of a repressive military dictatorship (1976-1983) kidnapped, tortured and forcibly disappeared massive numbers of people in more than 500 clandestine detention centers (CDCs). Thus, *horror*—not *beauty*—is more aptly associated with the events that took place in sites paradigmatic of state terrorism. Yet, my work with testimonies of women who survived clandestine detention reveals that beauty sometimes managed to sneak through the walls of prison. Beauty appeared both as an instrument of repression as well as something that could be reclaimed by women.

I listened to 52 women survivors whose oral testimonies were video-recorded and archived by the civil society association Memoria Abierta. During my research, this organization moved to the former ESMA (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada/School of Naval Mechanics), where an emblematic clandestine detention center operated during the dictatorship. Part of my research, then, took place on the actual site of extreme suffering for thousands of people, most of whom did not survive. In the 2000s, as human rights organizations moved to the former ESMA site, the decaying building structures, the humid cold walls and the abandoned



Portraits of women on the walls of the notorious ESMA prison, now a museum.

spaces underwent repair. Vestiges of the facility's former self began to transform as archives, museums, cultural centers, and activist initiatives retooled ESMA as a site of memory, artistic production, education and promotion of human rights.

Day after day I immersed myself in Memoria Abierta's Oral Archive, listening to the stories of women who survived state terror. These women's narratives spoke of unimaginable atrocity and perversion at the hands of police, security and military forces. However, it was not just horror that these survivors wished to recount. Stories about detainees' acts of care, solidarity and resistance were important in a number of narratives. There were also complex articulations of beauty, exposing both its oppressive and resistant face.

Through women's accounts in Memoria Abierta, as well as other published testimonies, I learned how women dealt with beauty expectations that were woven into the very fabric of repression; I smiled when hearing about women who parodied beauty ideals while in captivity; and I was deeply moved by the accounts of former detainees who were able to find or create beauty in the midst of horror. As we shall see, these stories

While this woman held entirely different political views from her repressors, the fact that the torturers' comments about her body were effective in augmenting her suffering exposes the power of cultural norms of femininity that can be used to discipline women through gender-shaming methods.

point to multiple meanings of beauty: the *corporeal*, associated with body features; the *existential*, related to the ability to understand the human condition; and the *humanistic*, linked to care and solidarity.

Iconic images of state terror—shackles, blindfolds, forced nudity, waterboarding or electric torture with the infamous *picana*—

make it difficult to imagine beauty in any guise in clandestine detention centers. Some women talked about such insidious uses of the body as sexual violence. While women experienced violence regardless of bodily appearance, physical beauty was sometimes explicitly linked to such a threat. Survivor Marta Bianchi heard a repressor say, “how pretty [...] this one [...] we rape her” (Memoria Abierta, *Testimonio de Marta Bianchi*, Buenos Aires, 2006). In addition to the more recognizable rape varieties, including gang rape or rape in the context of torture, women experienced other forms of coerced sexual contact. Sometimes these sexual acts took place outside the camps, as when repressors took women to apartments or hotels for sexual purposes. In these situations, the possibility of “consent” was rendered meaningless; thus, these acts need to be understood as part of an oppressive repertoire in which the feminine body was merely an instrument.

In the book *Ese Infierno* (2001), women who survived captivity in ESMA spoke about how repressors would arrange pseudo dates with women detainees, taking them to restaurants and expecting them to appear conventionally beautiful, wearing feminine dresses and accessories. While most of the 5,000 people estimated to have been held in ESMA did not survive, the military implemented a so-called process of *recuperación* (recuperation/rehabilitation) of selected prisoners, prompting them to abandon their previous political views and allegiances. In the case of women, proper femininity was apparently part of the recuperation script, as also noted in Memoria Abierta's book *Y Nadie Quería Saber* (2012). Marta Álvarez, one of many activist women held in ESMA, related how repressors realized that the activist woman “could think and develop her own ideas, and engage in political conversations, and discuss history, discuss politics, and discuss the economy. So, one had to find in that activist the feminine essence [...] That was the process of recuperation, at least with women: that we start doing ourselves up, that we start discovering motherhood, that we start talking about the kids” (Memoria

Abierta, *Testimonio de Marta Álvarez*, La Lucila, Buenos Aires, 2007). Here we see that a bodily appearance in compliance with normative feminine beauty was part of a repressive mandate. The irony of this type of beauty in a torture camp did not escape another ESMA survivor, Elisa Tokar, who in the book *Ese Infierno* recalled the combination of “the smell of rats and the aroma of French perfume” (2001, 178). Military men at the camp supplied the perfume.

In listening to women’s testimonies, I learned that feminine beauty products, including makeup, hair removal wax and nail polish, became available in at least some of the camps. Relatedly, survivor Isabel Fernández Blanco also spoke about a kind of “rehabilitation” directed to some detainees in El Olimpo: in one of the offices of this CDC, “women painted their nails, combed their hair [. . .] I suppose that the *compañeras* who were in charge of taking us out and bringing us to the GT2 Office were in charge of rehabilitating us, right? But nobody ever talked about politics either, or . . . anything. As I tell you, it was mere . . . nail painting” (*Memoria Abierta, Testimonio de Isabel Fernández Blanco*, Buenos Aires, 2005). As many of the detainees were activists, the absence of political talk and the presence of beauty practices is especially significant. The activist body was apparently to be replaced, in the case of women, by a domesticated, conventionally beautiful, feminine body.

Repressors sometimes used normative notions of femininity and beauty to humiliate and exacerbate the torment of women. The testimony of a survivor interviewed by Marta Diana in *Mujeres Guerrilleras* (1996, 49) is illustrative in that regard: “While they were torturing me they said: ‘You did not shave your hair . . .’ It is true, I was not waxed, and that hurt me more, that they touched my feminine dignity, than the torture per se, which was really hard. I still have the marks, third degree burns. But it was even more painful that they denigrated me as a woman.” While this woman held entirely different political views from her

repressors, the fact that the torturers’ comments about her body were effective in augmenting her suffering exposes the power of cultural norms of femininity that can be used to discipline women through gender-shaming methods.

Survivor Graciela García said that it was at ESMA that some women started to engage in certain beauty practices, such as the removal of body hair and the use of cosmetics. The result contrasted with the look that Graciela described as typical for women in her activist circles: jeans, sneakers, and sweaters that were similar to the attire of activist men. Graciela explained how in a situation as grim as the one in the camps, it makes sense to look for something that “would make you smile.” She added: “I think that it was one of the first times that we used makeup, and waxed ourselves, and looked at the color of our hair” (*Memoria Abierta, Testimonio de Graciela García*, Buenos Aires, 2007). While many beauty practices function as disciplining mechanisms—and can be conceived as particularly oppressive when performed to live up to repressors’ expectations—Graciela also hinted at the pleasurable aspect of these practices, of this particular way of “caring” for the body in a place where the body was the site of torture, humiliation and pain. In its capacity to produce a smile, beauty could also acquire a more resistant meaning associated with survival.

In her contribution to the book *Memories of Darkness* (co-edited with Pedro P. Funari and Andrés Zarankin, 2009), Melisa Salerno observed how repressors turned familiar clothing items—detainees’ own garments—into instruments of torment (for example, to blindfold detainees or tie up their hands). Depriving captive people of their clothing, or giving them the clothes that belonged to others, was another way to attack their sense of personhood and identity. However, detainees sometimes were able to turn that logic around, using clothing for their own goals. Ana Di Salvo, who was captive in the detention center El Vesubio, remembered an

anecdote involving a resistant use of clothing and the mocking of dominant notions of feminine beauty:

*One time it was the birthday of one of the chicas [young women] who was there. So the ones who went to headquarters [. . .] brought a dress. And we gave it to her as a gift. And since it was her birthday, the guards let her show off her dress. Then she did a kind of fashion show, walking among the cucas [prisoner cubicles; literally kennels]. And then, she said, “Ask me where I get my clothes.” So we said, “Where do you get your clothes?” [and she answered] “In the ‘Fuck Elegance Boutique’” [Boutique Me Cago en la Elegancia] [smiles]. And she walked, coming and going. Her name was Ofelia Casano, she was a medical doctor. When I left, she stayed, but did not survive (*Memoria Abierta, Testimonio de Ana Di Salvo*, Buenos Aires, 2003).*

This passage reveals how a parody of conventional femininity and of the beauty norms of the upper class (the boutique, the presumably elegant fashion show) functioned as an oppositional practice in an utterly oppressive setting. The collective dimensions of the scene are also apparent: the sense of solidarity, the kindness embedded in the group’s gift of clothing, and the creation of a space of shared laughter. These women were able to negotiate and take advantage of whatever opening was available within an overwhelming structure of terror. We can thus see how certain beauty practices were among the tactics to survive and resist that emerged in clandestine detention, something that some survivors had a particular interest in highlighting. For instance, Cristina Comandé said that instead of talking about the details of torture, she wished to do something different: “to emphasize the solidarity and support that I received from and gave to my *compañeros* [comrades/fellow detainees]” (*Memoria Abierta, Testimonio de Cristina Comandé*, Buenos Aires, 2005). Sadly, as the story of the gift of clothing and the mock runway illustrates, though



The basement of the ESMA prison.

detainees' acts of mutual care went a long way in sustaining body and soul, the lives of countless people were not spared.

Some of the ways in which detainees coped with and resisted the extreme conditions of the camps evoke a deeper meaning of beauty, beyond corporeal traits and appearance. Marta García de Candeloro, who spent six months detained in La Cueva, experienced and witnessed all manner of violence and terror; yet, she also mentioned beauty explicitly: "Everything else is already in my testimony, everything else is the horror, and everything else also has great beauty. It seems strange, no?, to say that all that . . . but it has the beauty of knowing what a human being is, what our limits are, what it means to want to live and to be able to live" (Memoria Abierta, *Testimonio de Marta García de Candeloro*, Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires, 2007). Here Marta finds beauty in the ability to understand the human condition, which includes the personal strengths and support that human beings might discover even in the ugliest of situations. This existential connotation of beauty also resonates with a humanistic meaning implicitly conveyed through survivors' testimonies of care and solidarity, for they point to the ethical and aesthetic value

of positive human connections that were integral to survival. In her book *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999), Elaine Scarry points out that beauty has a way of proliferating itself, reflected in the common impulse to reproduce what is beautiful. Similarly, there is beauty in solidarity, which already entails a multiplicative quality in the ways it generates additional acts of support. Further, Scarry reasons that "beauty is lifesaving" (24) or at least "life affirming" (27). The beauty of solidarity in the form of a poem, a shared piece of bread, a consoling song, or a helping hand sustained lives in very real ways in torture and extermination camps.

Clandestine detention centers were, no doubt, spaces of sheer horror. When repressors introduced anything remotely associated with beauty—particularly in relation to women's bodies—it was often to enhance their own power. One may wonder, for example, why would state representatives be invested in how women looked—beyond the sexual desires of individual repressors? To what extent were beauty norms outside the camps used to intensify oppression within their walls? State power was manifested partly through repressors' ability to impose gender norms and exploit gender inequalities in clandestine detention centers. And still, a lens that places vulnerability and agency within the same frame allows us to see how gendered beauty practices could also become instruments of survival and resistance for some women. What's more, the ability of survivors to excavate beauty—in its most profound meanings—from the grounds of horror speaks not only of physical survival, but of the survival of a dignified and resistant stance that the regime could not crush.

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The translation of all texts and testimonies originally in Spanish were done by the author.



Beasts and Beauty in Colombia;

Power, Politics and Pageants

By MICHAEL STANFIELD

I ENCOUNTERED SOME OF COLOMBIA'S MANY contradictions during my first visit in 1985. Lush, tropical mountains arched across this South American nation, so very rich in resources and yet one where most of its citizens lived in poverty. In the southern department of Cauca, the air smelled of pine, citrus and banana, the atmosphere full of invigorating oxygen and rhythmic cumbia. There, in one particularly bucolic town, a gaunt and twitchy French cocaine mule revealed to me the addictive power of a major Colombian export, while another charming national veteran of the trade offered to sell me a pound of un-cut cocaine for \$700. I did the math and recognized that I could clear \$50,000 on the U.S. retail market. However, being more church kid than capitalist, I passed on his offer.

In Medellín, cocaine capital of the world at the time, one hundred different death squads brought the murder rate to nearly 2,000 annually. Police officers openly admitted to me that they acted as death squads while on the job. By my third visit to Colombia in 1991, more than 6,000 people were being killed yearly in a city of two million inhabitants; only one suspect was arrested for every thousand homicides as impunity reigned. Today, Medellín's murder rate has bottomed out at around 775 annually, equivalent to a very bad year—like last year—in Chicago.

In Bogotá, Colombia's proud and cool capital, legions of dazzling young women in short skirts and heels hurried along Seventh Avenue, the main drag, to pink-collar jobs that paid a meager \$3 daily, real wages that had not increased since the 1950s. The Plaza Bolívar, the central square and ceremonial heart of the nation,

Colombian beauty queens Paula Andrea Betancourt and Carolina Gómez, 1993

However, unlike Mexico, where pre-Columbian indigenous civilizations are extolled as the cradles of civilization, Colombians prefer the Spanish side of their paternity and distance themselves from what is considered the socially inferior indigenous side of mixing.



María Gómez, Medellín, 1913.

emanated the power and presence of a planned Spanish colonial city, but I noticed that the national cathedral was scarred with bullet holes from an urban riot forty years before. Adjacent to it, the Palacio de Justicia, had once promised “laws that would bring liberty,” but the supreme court soon became a site of battle and massacre. Twenty or so blocks to the north up Seventh Avenue, army platoons patrolled between the National Library and the National Park, alert to dramatic lightning strikes from M-19 insurgents. Despite its appearance of power and permanence, I learned that the Colombian government lacked sovereignty even in its own capital city.

Over the next three decades, I fell in love with the country and its people and I took up the challenge of confronting the contradictions and complexities of Colombian reality as I reinterpreted Colombia’s history. Beauty—gendered female—emerged as a central positive expression of Colombian identity, one that masked the pervasive beasts—gendered male—that so relentlessly undermine national unity and collective pride. Colombians crave beauty given the poverty, marginalization and insecurity that they are confronted with daily and throughout Colombian history.

Beautiful women are often seen in the company of older powerful men, a coupling bringing social power on unequal terms but of mutual benefit. A nation ripped apart by civil war, Colombia became pageant-mad in the 1950s and 1960s while it slowly rebuilt a stable but exclusionary democratic system. Pageants offered a non-partisan, inclusive, civil, peaceful, and functional celebration to repair a torn and fragile social fabric. Beauty pageants appear to be democratic and modern but are often elite and exclusive, much like Colombian governance. Colombians hold more than 3,700 pageants annually (an estimated

100,000 in the United States), many of them involving children and promoting various products. Some celebrate schools, neighborhoods, culture and folklore; others serve as pyramid pageants bridging local, regional, national and international competitions.

Questions of national identity and mythologies of race find expression through beauty across the Americas, as often reflected in beauty pageants. Similar to Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Paraguay, Colombia accepts a racial hybridity formed through *mestizaje*, the mixing of peoples and cultures from Europe, Africa and the Americas. However, unlike Mexico, where pre-Columbian indigenous civilizations are extolled as the cradles of civilization, Colombians prefer the Spanish side of their paternity and distance themselves from what is considered the socially inferior indigenous side of mixing. Like Brazil, Colombia has a large black and mulatto population, especially in the tropical lowlands of the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, but due to customary discrimination and since most Colombians are not black and live in the Andean valleys, a black woman may not represent national beauty. However, in 2001, at the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, Colombia did select a black woman as its national beauty queen. She represented the majority black and resource rich Chocó and was dubbed the “Black Barbie,” becoming a plastic commodity for white consumption; meanwhile Colombian armed forces conducted a bombing and terrorist campaign in the Chocó for the purpose of stealing resources and land.

Similar to New Orleans, Cartagena, once a Caribbean port of entry for slaves and now the home of the national beauty pageant, evolved from its history of slavery to become a city of libertine freedom and tropical sensuousness—a vacation spot featuring revealed bodies and celebratory relief from the tensions and violence that often stalk the area. Neighboring Barranquilla and its two most famous exports, Shakira and Sofia Vergara, reinforce the image of Colombia as a white nation, but one epitomizing the buoyant sensuality of the coast.

Like the Dominican Republic, Argentina and the United States, Colombia builds its racial mythology around a white center, thus denying brown and black citizens the legitimacy of truly belonging to the nation. European colonialism established a firm foundation of white supremacy across the Americas, one still maintained throughout most of these regions. Beauty, then, often finds expression in varieties of whiteness, shading blackness with hues of brown as preferred national racial representations. Venezuela punctuates development dreams and its international petroleum economy by tending to select northern European blondes as their representative queens, while neighboring Colombia typically prefers a more Mediterranean version of whiteness. The epitome of Colombian beauty, a “typical Latin beauty,” is a young brunette with cinnamon eyes and wheat skin, a proud, sexy, and graceful *colombiana* who embodies the preferred and positive

national image in herself. She is both modern and developed, therefore white, but also traditional and representative of a diverse and divided nation, one still seeking modern order through colonial hierarchy.

Why beauty is demanded more from women than men frequently prompts incessant academic debate between biologists and sociologists, evolutionary psychologists and cultural anthropologists. Linda Jackson in her persuasive book, *Physical Appearance and Gender: Sociobiological and Sociocultural Perspectives*, found evidence and arguments from partisans of both perspectives compelling, inviting more inclusive discussions to explore both sides of the bio/social border. Clearly, as social but territorial apes, we carry a long, sometimes ugly, hardwired evolutionary inheritance, yet adults still ask “Is it a boy or a girl?” as their foundational question at the birth of a child. I’ve concluded that biology provides



Enrica Espinelli, Italy/Medellin, 1916

the hardware of what we are while social constructions of gender furnish the software of how we ought to function. In a deeply conservative and Catholic country like Colombia, men and women are gendered as naturally different, not the same. The traditional dictum, reinforced by the themes of Colombian history, state that “men should be powerful, women should be beautiful,” making beauty the responsibility of women, leaving the rights of power to men.

The dysfunction of Colombia is gendered male. Patriarchal institutions in government, law, religion and the home, block evolution toward a modern democratic society. Violence in myriad forms, although at times perpetrated by females, is typically directed by and carried out by males. The poverty shared by most Colombians falls heaviest on females who tend to be poorer, paid less, and unemployed at higher rates than males. For non-elite women, social and political exclusion impedes reform and representation in a non-sovereign state, preventing protection in a socially dangerous environment. Customary racism maintains inherited privilege as it enforces notions of Colombian identity and beauty. As a result, a woman's beauty and sexuality becomes an important socio-economic card for mobility in a society of limited opportunity and preserved inequality. In a world full of so many institutionalized beasts, beauty represents the feminine, life-giving, peaceful and functional essence all crave but few enjoy.

Beauty's definition and symbolism varies through time and by region. In both Colombia and the United States during the 19th century, beauty frequently found deep expression in the written word and in the internal beauty of character and morality rather than in external dimensions and facial symmetry. Since women, especially mothers, were thought to enjoy superior moral and ethical status over males, a woman's beautiful character promised salvation from life's challenges, decreasing the distance between Heaven and Earth for men. A conservative Colombian Catholic church preserved the traditional gender responsibilities of good mothers and policed female fashion until the 1960s

as international sources brought foreign fashions and an external, corporeal image of beauty in photographs, motion pictures, mass advertising, and television, thus bolstering a modern visual representation of beauty that gained momentum throughout the 20th century.

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Beauty travels in the company of power. Since humans notice and value beauty, wealth often seeks and attracts—and defines—beauty. The cigar-smoking female hat makers of Norte de Santander enjoyed the reputation for being the most beautiful women in Colombia in the 1850s, distinguished as desirable and Spanish by their relative wealth and fine clothing. A half century later, gold, coffee and industry made Antioquia and its capital Medellín famous, calling attention to the beauty of its women, who were defined traditionally as biblical in their purity and as modern in their superior vigorous race. When Cali boomed in the 1950s and 1960s, *caleñas* gained fame as the most beautiful Colombian women, accentuated by their modern and exotic sex appeal. Oil booms brought fame to the women of Bucaramanga in the 1970s as the international cocaine economy democratized beauty at the national pageant, decisively supported by wealthy upstart drug lords.

The best of Colombian beauty often place high in the Miss Universe pageant, itself a product of the beasts of both 20th century World Wars. The Miss Universe

pageant started life from the ruins and restructuring of Europe following the Great War, then moved to the United States after the atrocities of World War II, becoming the pinnacle international capitalist pageant open to beautiful women from civilized nations. Under ownership from 1996 to 2015 by notorious pageant creep and now president Donald Trump, the Miss Universe pageant devolved into a glitzy tits and ass show, with the owner exercising his proprietary rights—like that of a slave master—by barging in on teenage contestants in their dressing rooms and then sneering narcissistically at the camera to punctuate his boorish essence. Beauty and the beast don't just travel together in Colombia.

In 2011, I predicted that Miss Colombia would soon win the Miss Universe pageant and not because of the relative beauty of *colombianas* or the penchant for historians to risk predictions. The country had only won that coveted title once in 1958 when the country appeared to be rebuilding civilian government out of the ruins of civil war and dictatorship. Colombia regained the coveted crown in 2014—and almost again in 2015—after signing a Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2011, and as it seemed to be moving out of the double horrors of Cold and Drug Wars. Paulina Vega stood gorgeous and proud, and she publicly disagreed with Trump's racist and crude remarks about Mexicans in 2015, after which she remained queen while Trump lost his sponsors and sold the pageant. Vega won in part for her looks, but also because she represented a resource-rich nation, once again safe for international business, and, as always, coveted by powerful corporations directed mostly by aggressive and greedy white men.

Michael Edward Stanfield is professor of history and Latin American Studies at the University of San Francisco. His most recent book, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia (University of Texas Press, 2013), explores how beauty projects a positive national image for Colombians faced by systemic ugliness.

MASCULINITY AND BEAUTY



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Jack Lozano Ruiz in Puerto de Pucallpa, Peru, April 2015.

Peruvian Beauty

Representations of Masculinity and the Body among Peruvian Men

By NORMA FULLER

DURING AN OFFICIAL MEETING THE FORMER president of Peru, Ollanta Humala (2011-2016), urged the youngsters gathered there to act as men, and said that “instead of spending their time going to discos and adopting female habits such as dyeing their hair or wearing earrings, you should go to the barracks and serve your country.” This speech epitomizes the representation of the ideal male body among Peruvian men; it should be strong, fit to fight and as opposite from femininity as possible.

Gender studies have weakened the link between biological imperatives and the production of gender identities. Thus, we don’t ask what it means to be male or female, but we look at the way we talk about these biological differences in each particular context (for more on this subject, you can take a look at Teresa De Lauretis’ *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* or several of theorist Judith Butler’s excellent books).

We use words to interpret, encode and

understand our bodily sensations. Words attach significance to those sensations. Thus, the body is at the same time the locus of pain, pleasure and the person itself and the object of social coercion.

We see (and rank) our bodies and their different anatomical parts and bodily functions through the lens of the society in which we live. For example, in Western cultures the head is not only the seat of intellect but is also identified with command, control, and positions of

leadership. As a portrayer of meanings, the body shows us how a social group represents itself. In other words, it can be understood as an allegory of the social order. Therefore, the body is not just the raw material on which the social order is etched, but one of the elements that establishes, expresses and reproduces its hierarchies.

To understand the hierarchies of body and masculinities in Peru, I interviewed a sample of 120 men living in three cities: Lima, Cuzco and Iquitos. The concepts of the masculine body are important because they are a symbolic arena where gender, race and ethnic relations in Peruvian society are expressed, performed and questioned. In this sense the body becomes a powerful tool for legitimizing social and gender orders.

THE MAKEUP OF BODY

The body itself is made up of matter and appearance. The matter of the masculine body has two elements: sex (the sexual organs represented by the penis) and strength (muscles, capacity). Appearance, for its part, is made up of the face and adornments. The face is associated with the expression of inner qualities. The body-appearance is what other people see so it must be presentable and adorned to communicate the male's social worth. As Lucho, a 40-year-old working-class man from Lima, explains, "The first thing people look at is your face, your expression. Apart from that you have to be well dressed, presentable." The term "presentable" alludes to "who I am" in social terms, the recognition that one expects from another in order to confirm one's own sense of masculinity or worth. In sum, there are two bodily dimensions: the body-matter, whose seat is sex/strength, and body-appearance, which emits signals through the face and external bodily adornments.

The most important parts of the body are the face—the seat of moral qualities—and the chest and limbs, the seat of strength. According to Sabio, a 40-year-old, middle-class man from Cuzco, "Years ago the body part I focused most on—

apart from my face—was my chest. I was obsessed with being an 'Atlas.' I'd even work out and see how my chest grew. But that's all in the past now. Now I'd say that my face is probably the most important part since that is what people see."

Strength relates to attractiveness. The men interviewed declared that a muscular body that expresses strength is what arouses female desire. That is why men condition their bodies through sport and physical exercise, which stimulates, builds up and expresses the aspect that makes the male body attractive.

Furthermore, strength, the quality that is the source of masculinity, dramatizes one of the great themes of the male identity: to be or not to be somebody; to achieve or not to achieve. Though supposedly anchored in matter, strength must be gained, improved and communicated. One is not born with strength, but must acquire it. Therefore, what is apparently the most natural trait at the heart of male superiority is also the one that is most artificial and most closely associated with social qualities.

In other words, the attractiveness of a man resides in a strong body and a handsome face that displays a capacity for control and authority.

APPEARANCE

Appearance is also an area through which gender differences are enacted and materialized and where the rigid gender boundaries found in Peruvian society are often validated or questioned. Care of the male appearance focuses on presentation but never on the production of beauty, the latter being a female activity and therefore taboo for males. According to the men interviewed, a male should not wear any adornments that look feminine. Therefore, makeup is out of the question for males

because it feminizes them. As Lucas, a 52-year-old, middle-class man from Cuzco, says, "I think it's shocking. I can't fathom why a man would want to use make-up. He'd have to have semi-female tendencies. I'm still a bit conservative in that respect; I suppose it's a machismo thing. As for a woman to use makeup on herself, she has every right. And anyway it's a token of female beauty."

This claim turns on the association of the masculine with everything that is hard and strong, and the feminine with all that is soft and weak. Beauty is associated with softness while handsomeness is associated with strength. It is for women to be beautiful, soft, and delicate.

BEAUTY

Beauty in the strictly corporal sense covers both the esthetically beautiful and the attractive. Aesthetic beauty is associated with delicacy, softness, and fine features. Women possess beauty—softness/delicacy, while men are handsome—attractiveness/strength. Male beauty is called attractiveness and is directly associated with the strength expressed in a hard, muscular body, in firm thighs and buttocks. As Julio, a 30-year-old, working-class man from Iquitos, says, "They look at your body to see if you are well built. It doesn't matter how ugly you are, you'll still be a real man. You hear that a lot: 'What a body!'"

Attractive faces are associated with a display of security and authority both toward other males to command respect, and toward women to denote authority and firmness of character. This is what is referred to as self-confidence. In this way, attractiveness is directly associated with the capacity for control and domination.

Seen from another perspective, beauty is associated with typical Caucasian looks, underlining the racial and class differences that pervade Peruvian society. A handsome man has white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. However, this beauty emanates from the face, not from the attractiveness of a strong body. As Ruso, a 23-year-old, working-class man from Lima, says, "A handsome man is man who is attractive, who takes care of his appearance, who

looks after his body. He'd be a man who is handsome and has bearing. But a man cannot be good-looking. That's absurd. Only gringos [Caucasian men] are good-looking." By attributing this quality to light-skinned men, working-class men recognize the existence of racial hierarchies but invert them by claiming the virile attributes for themselves. The working-class man can claim to be more masculine than the men of the dominant racial or ethnic groups. His attractiveness lies in his body, in the very essence of his masculinity, while the attractiveness of the

men of other races resides in their beauty, a quality symbolically associated with the feminine. Oscar, a 42-year-old, working-class man from Lima, puts it this way: "A woman would say that a good-looking man is tall, white, with light-colored eyes and blond because here [in Peru] we are racist."

Working-class males acknowledge that women are drawn to a beautiful face and that men with white phenotypical features have a greater likelihood of attracting women. To quote El Ruso once more, "A good-looking man? That's absurd. But they say that a gringo, a white guy has a better

chance of wooing or chatting up girls." Thus, what people think about beauty enables us to reconstruct the layout of the gender and race orders that prevail in Peruvian society.

In short, beauty is associated with femininity and the Caucasian biotype. The representation of beauty by the groups studied contains an unerring perception of the prevailing racism and of the sexual and marital agenda that leads women (and men) to seek out partners who will boost their social status. Male beauty resides in the attractiveness of bodily strength and even features. In fact, that is true for all males, regardless of race. In that way, masculinity unites the male category and becomes one of the most highly valued qualities in intellectual and moral terms. In other words, the attractiveness of a man resides in a strong body and a handsome face that displays a capacity for control and authority. Power is incarnated in men's bodies and expressed in their faces.

Beauty, one of the most highly valued bodily attributes, dramatizes the gender, racial and ethnic relations that divide Peruvian society. We found in our study that what constitutes the essential male body is not a neutral construction of what was already there, but an allegory of social and gender orders. In this sense the body becomes the most powerful tool for legitimizing those orders. In the end, the remarks of former president Ollanta Humala, which I quoted at the beginning of this article, vividly expresses the ethnic and class tensions that permeate Peruvian society. The debate about male beauty is an arena where men of different social and ethnic background question, redefine and reaffirm their identities.

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A Peruvian fisherman poses next to his boat in the small cove of La Islilla, Piura, Peru, December 2016.



Technologies of Gender

The Transformation of Masculinity **By LAUREN E. GULBAS**

IT WAS A TUESDAY AFTERNOON IN EARLY June 2005, and I was sitting with well-known cosmetic surgeon Dr. Julien Martinez (a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality) in his spa-like clinic office, nestled amidst the luxury boutiques of an upscale shopping mall in Caracas, Venezuela. His colleague, Dr. Richard Galindo, suddenly interrupted our conversation. When Dr. Martinez explained to Dr. Galindo (also a pseudonym) that I was visiting from the United States to carry out an ethnographic study on women, beauty, and cosmetic surgery, Dr. Galindo turned to me and asserted, “You should talk to men, too.” Curious, I asked the physician to explain, and soon found myself conducting my first interview with a man who had cosmetic surgery.

As Dr. Galindo’s story unfolded, I learned about his experience as a patient undergoing blepharoplasty—an eye lift. He explained that an eye lift erased the signs of fatigue and age that had accumulated over time. Dr. Galindo perceived the eye lift as essential to maintaining a busy medical practice, because patients associated good looks with the positive qualities of a successful physician: persistence, capability, and tirelessness. “So you see,” Dr. Galindo concluded, “men are just as concerned about their appearance as women. We just don’t talk about it.”

In the span of thirty minutes, my research approach shifted fundamentally as I began to consider the cultural intersections between beauty and masculinity. I realized that I had developed several biases about who had cosmetic surgery and why. To some extent, my assumptions were based in the fact that cosmetic surgery is an overwhelmingly gendered practice. In Venezuela, for example, women requesting cosmetic surgery outnumber men by nearly twenty-two to one. Before my serendipitous encounter with Dr. Galindo, I had interpreted this predominance as clear evidence of the ways in which beauty work was defined as

A 1999 decree by President Hugo Chávez had prohibited public institutions from collecting service fees, which meant that all medical care in public hospitals, including cosmetic surgery, was available at no charge to patients.



Surgeons perform breast implants.

primarily women’s work.

But Dr. Galindo’s account reminded me how men could be susceptible to some of the most fundamental contradictions between the ways that real human bodies vary and change, and Western expectations regarding beauty. Classical Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato developed notions of beauty that emphasized mathematical proportions and harmony, but often in ways that took the male body as the starting point. Such ideas persisted in early modern Europe through the works of Enlightenment thinkers, including Kant and Rousseau, who

associated beauty with moral goodness. Ordinary people found similar values in fairy tales, in which the good and virtuous are described as naturally and harmoniously beautiful—a sharp contrast to the evil and corrupt, who are haggard, old, angular and ugly. Many of these stories feature noble men (such as the Pig King, the Beast, the Frog Prince) whose virtue and beauty have been magically misaligned. These stories carry cultural messages about the value of physical appearance, and they also reveal expectations about aesthetics and masculine power.

Dr. Galindo’s narrative reflected similar themes linking aesthetics with virtue. He argued that as he aged, cosmetic surgery was necessary to alleviate the growing dissonance between his physical appearance and his personal character traits. The interview clearly demonstrated that the culture of beauty presented opportunities and constraints for Venezuelan men, but it also raised important questions regarding how men from different socioeconomic statuses might engage in and justify cosmetic surgery.

To answer these questions, I began an anthropological investigation of the cosmetic surgery industry in Caracas, Venezuela. From 2005 to 2007, I observed more than sixty hours of surgery and spoke with nearly four hundred men and women, including patients, cosmetic surgeons, models, dieticians, psychologists, cosmetologists, politicians and street vendors.

I also scoured medical registry data in private clinics and public hospitals to learn more. In Caracas, the healthcare system can be described in terms of stark contrasts: from bright and modern private clinics to the older, run-down public hospitals. These two systems—private and public—mirror class divisions in Venezuelan society. In one private clinic, serving a predominantly middle- and upper-class clientele, most men sought surgery to fix their noses, but liposuction and face and eye lifts were also

popular. In the public hospital, where the poor and working class seek medical care, nose jobs were by far the most common procedure, followed by ear tucks. Still, the percentage of men undergoing cosmetic surgery in both settings was low. Just over eight percent of the patient population in the private clinic were men; in the public hospital, less than four percent sought cosmetic surgery.

As I pored over my notes and survey data, it was clear that men's perceptions of cosmetic surgery—and their justifications for embarking on personal quests for transformation—varied widely, in ways that could not be attributed simply to issues of individual psychology, such as self-esteem, body image or vanity. Although my first encounter was with a physician who looked for positive character traits when he gazed in the mirror, I found the clinical encounter—when cosmetic surgeons directed that gaze toward men who were often of other social statuses—to be a rich site for exploring competing representations of masculinity. Consider the following ethnographic example.

At 8:30 in the morning on May 7, 2007, I was sitting in the waiting room of the plastic surgery department in one of the largest public hospitals in Caracas. A notice was posted next to the sign-in desk, alerting patients that consultations for breast augmentation surgery had been suspended. A 1999 decree by President Hugo Chávez had prohibited public institutions from collecting service fees, which meant that all medical care in public hospitals, including cosmetic surgery, was available at no charge to patients. In a society enchanted with telenovelas and images of pageant princesses, hospitals soon became inundated with demands for breast implants. Unable to meet the demand, plastic surgery departments across the country were forced to limit the number of breast augmentation surgeries they would perform. Nevertheless, demand for cosmetic surgery remained steady, and the wait list for some surgical procedures was more than two years.

That morning, a young man dressed in a striped rugby shirt and jeans checked in

with the administrative assistant. After a ten-minute wait, the nurse summoned him for his consultation with the all-male team of surgeons. He sat on the examination table, his nutmeg skin a warm contrast to the paler skin tones of the medical team. Carlos, who had just turned 18, wanted to straighten the bridge of his nose. When questioned why, Carlos told the doctors he had fractured his nose in a fight a few days earlier. After examining him, the doctors concluded that there was no evidence of a recent fracture, although it appeared that the nose had suffered trauma years prior. Carlos was dismissed to wait outside the examination room, while the team of physicians determined a course of action.

As Carlos waited, I sat with him to learn more about why he wanted to fix his nose, and he offered me explanations that diverged significantly from the story he had given to the surgeons. He thought his nose was “ugly” and “crooked,” and his friends teased him about it. Although he saw their mockery as friendly, Carlos could not help but internalize the message about his physical appearance, which he insisted was a normal way for a Venezuelan man to feel. “In reality, men take care of themselves just as much as women. But it has not always been this way.” I asked him what had changed. He explained that “it is because machismo is diminishing.” Machismo defines masculine behavior as dominant, but Carlos expressed confidentially to me—a foreign anthropologist and a woman—the conviction that it should not prevent a young man like him from engaging in beauty work. Even as he asserted his freedom from old gender constraints, Carlos also raised a third reason for seeking surgery: he now had asthma and found it difficult to breathe. A nose job, he asserted, could help him breathe better.

A few moments later, the surgeons called Carlos's name, and I followed him back into the examination room. The surgeons decided to straighten his nose, and they told him that it could be done under local anesthetic. Doing so, they explained, would help them to fix his nose more quickly. Carlos agreed. He was told to lie on the examination table, and a resident began to inject a local anesthetic in his nose. When

it was time to inject the interior of his nose, Carlos started squirming. “No, no, I don't want to do this! It hurts too much,” he cried. The resident told Carlos to “just deal with it, stop moving, and act like a man.” As the anesthetic began to take effect, Carlos started flailing his arms. “I cannot breathe. I am telling you I cannot breathe!” The resident told him to calm down, reassuring him that he could breathe and that it was only the numbness that made it seem like he could not. The resident looked at me and said, “Can you believe the way he is acting? I have girl patients who never flinch when I give them a shot.” Carlos shot me an embarrassed glance, and then shut his eyes tightly. A tear streamed out of the corner of his eye.

Later that day, I accompanied the resident during his rounds in the main hospital building. We paused in the men's wing to check on a couple of patients. One fifty-year-old man, nicknamed “El Peluche,” had been shot in the back, which resulted in complete paralysis of his legs. El Peluche frequently developed bed sores, but one sore had become infected. A deep, open wound emerged in its place, and El Peluche was waiting to get a skin graft to close it. Unlike Carlos, however, El Peluche would have to wait. The machine used to sterilize the skin was broken, and the hospital did not have the financial resources to repair or replace it.

In the hospital, physicians frequently complained about their ability to provide care in a setting that was unable to maintain a stock of basic supplies, including sterile gloves, syringes, and bandages. Often, the cost of purchasing supplies was passed on to patients, who frequently occupied hospital beds for the sole purpose of waiting for surgery; or their family members, who were often charged with bringing the necessary surgical materials from a local pharmacy. Recurrent cancellations—because of periodic electrical outages, equipment malfunctions, and shortages in sterile water, surgical instruments and anesthesia—lengthened patients' wait times for surgery and corresponding length of stay in the hospital.

The crumbling infrastructure in the public hospital meant that there was little the surgeons could do for El Peluche except to



José Gregorio Hernández is the patron saint of health and medicine. The photo illustrates a small shrine a patient put together prior to having cosmetic surgery. Since Hernández is rumored to have enjoyed smoking and drinking strong coffee, the patient provided a small offering.

clean his wounds. The resident pulled out a bottle of vinegar, a cost-effective disinfecting agent, and poured it into El Peluche's abscess. Afterward, the resident remarked to me that El Peluche's wounds were his fault. "He's a criminal, and he got shot for it. All the men here are criminals." I silently wondered whether his judgement extended to Carlos, who was treated just hours prior.

Almost a decade after completing my study, my experience in the hospital that day remains fresh in my memory. What has become clear to me is that beauty matters because people are driven to make aesthetic judgements of others. Patients evaluate their doctors' appearance to assess their medical skills, and doctors, in turn, appraise their patients' appearance to determine their worthiness. Carlos, in his attempt to mitigate any negative judgement, performed what he thought were

the appropriate gendered expectations of the surgical team. He emphasized that his nose was broken in a fight, hoping to signal his masculine dominance rather than an aesthetic dissatisfaction—too feminine, or difficulty breathing due to asthma—too weak. Yet, the very act of having surgery became a way to challenge Carlos's masculinity: his squeamishness during surgery was demonstrative of an insufficiently manly performance.

Carlos was not the first patient that I had encountered in the hospital who elected to have a nose job (rhinoplasty) under local anesthetic. Without the need to be sedated under general anesthesia, numerous patients could bypass the long wait for surgery, as their procedure could be performed in the hospital annex on an outpatient basis. Few patients were prepared for the pain, discomfort and

blood, however.

Rather than acknowledge the fear that such experiences could generate, however, the surgeons castigated Carlos for not acting like a man. Although government reforms removed significant barriers to accessing cosmetic surgery, Carlos still had to seek care in an institution that reinforced the lingering inequalities in Venezuelan societies. His quest to see a modern and attractive man in the mirror led instead to an ordeal in which other men used their social status to tell him that he still lacked the male virtues that they were likely to see in themselves.

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Building Muscles in Rio's Fitness Clubs

The Ritual Use of Anabolic Steroids **By CESAR SABINO**

MEN WHO FREQUENT GYMS AND FITNESS CLUBS

IN RIO de Janeiro often have one thing on their mind: sculpting their bodies. I interviewed two hundred men over a period of ten years and found that that eight out of every ten men admitted to using steroids for muscle gain. The use of anabolic steroids reflected their vision—a masculine ethos accompanied by individualistic and conservative values.

On the whole, men who use steroids are professionals such as lawyers, business administrators, economists and engineers, or students, both from the university and private high schools. They represent Rio de Janeiro's middle class and seek to promote their image through the sculpting of the body in gyms and fitness clubs. They want their bodies to reflect male dominance and their importance in Brazilian society.

The use of illegal substances to construct a muscular body is not about flaunting laws, but is rather an attempt to harmonize their bodies with dominant beauty standards. The body builders seek status within the social group that frequents gyms and fitness clubs—and within wider society. The aesthetics of muscle building are not associated with marginality or deviancy, even though the purchase of the products to maintain these physiques may be illegal. The user of anabolic steroids breaks the law in order to fit in.

When men first join a gym or fitness club, they may not yet be thinking about sculpting their bodies. They learn about the process there. Some men are bigger and more muscular and others are not, so peer pressure makes the latter overly conscious of the differences—what one might call “unequal distribution of bodily capital.” The amount of muscle determines one's position within the gym hierarchy. These roles can be divided into three main categories:

1.The Bodybuilders: these men dominate the space, and are semi-professional or professional bodybuilders who exhibit a physique marked by years or even decades of exercise. They frequent a few specialized gyms. They already possess the knowledge and thus the social capital associated with producing a muscular body, and they are usually the ones who know how to get anabolic steroids. Bodybuilders represent a hegemonic model of masculinity that everyone recognizes as an ascetic ideal that demands discipline. They exercise more than anyone else and constantly seek to develop bigger, more defined muscles and diminish their fat percentages. They are also those who consume most steroids.

2.The Veterans: these men possess considerable muscle mass but not as much as bodybuilders. They have years of exercise under their belt, but without the dedication typical of bodybuilders. They consume steroids sporadically, with the objective of “keeping an attractive body,” which indicates that they follow less stringent guidelines compared to bodybuilders. They represent a hegemonic type of masculinity that is more attainable.

3.The Common Men: these men are the largest group, constituted by all those who do not have very athletic physiques. They are judged as being too thin or too fat by the other two groups. They do not possess any “bodily capital” and are thus novices or sporadic gym goers who are deemed by those better endowed as not dedicated enough to exercise or to diet. Bodybuilding has similarities to the rituals that could be found in religious practices or rites of passage. The construction of the body and of a masculine identity within gyms and fitness clubs can take two to four years, or even longer in certain cases. The novice who wants to become a bodybuilder has to adapt his body as much as possible to correspond to the desirable physique,

and to complete this social ritual he needs to use steroids. The use of these drugs has not only physical effects but also acquires a symbolic significance to the group as a rite of passage. It marks the transition from one status to another within the hierarchy of a gym or fitness club.

A novice proves he is aspiring to transform himself from a common man to a bonafide bodybuilder by learning how to use steroids. The hierarchy of the fitness club is determined by the behavior, the knowledge and the physique that a practitioner gradually adopts. In other words, the physical changes signify a change in status because they mean one has gained the social capital associated with knowing how to buy these illegal substances, the effects of each substance, how to administer them, how to measure their effects, and what diets and supplements should be used in conjunction with steroids. The production of outstanding muscularity requires a certain experimentation with the body and the knowledge of how to transform it through disciplinary practices in the name of health and well-being.

Unlike other rites of passage, in which going through the ritual practice guarantees a new position in the social hierarchy, the identity of a bodybuilder is more fleeting. Even if he is recognized as a bodybuilder at his gym, he must always have to pay the price of taking steroids and run the risks they represent, because his whole identity is tied to a physical aspect that can easily deteriorate over time. Being “in shape” is a fragile and volatile condition that is always in danger of deteriorating.

This process of constructing a bodybuilding identity is tied to the process of constructing masculinity. As a “real man,” the bodybuilder must constantly prove to himself and to others that he is



Jean Carlos Alfaro strolls past a mural and a conservatively dressed woman in the Castilla District in the Callao region.



These indigenous men from the Peruvian Amazons take pride in their well-built bodies. Ucayali region, December 2016.

strong enough, audacious enough and *macho* enough. Those who frequent fitness clubs are included in the most macho group through steroid use. This group identity is later reaffirmed through parties and other social events that also function as rites of passage. At these social events a man consolidates his position within the larger social group through the reinforcement of social relations, until he is eventually accepted as “one of us.” Even the fact of being invited to these events signifies the recognition of a new status due to a man’s physique.

These rituals separate the “strong, healthy and handsome” from those considered “weak, sick and ugly.” Anabolic steroids, therefore, represent a fundamental item in the aesthetic construction of masculinity of the alpha group. All users know that steroids can cause cancer, sexual impotence and even death, but these risks prove that a bodybuilder is willing to submit his body to pain and suffering in the name of

becoming initiated into the group.

The binary oppositions mentioned earlier—between weak and strong men, healthy and sickly men, or handsome and ugly men—are directly related to a specific worldview. These men are, in general, members of an urban middle class seeking upward mobility, and they share specific tastes pertaining to social class. These tastes, which reassert social distinctions, are translated into outward signs, in this case the bodily physique associated with middle-class masculinity. A rigid and imposing muscularity is the foremost sign of social distinction and power in the group I studied, but it has to be a body sculpted by machines and by steroids, a result not available to a blue-collar worker. This hegemonic masculinity is tied to a particular aesthetic but is also tied to the values, attitude and morals of a dominant heterosexual macho behavior.

Bodybuilding, therefore, can be used as an aesthetic practice that reproduces certain social classifications, reinforcing

not only the gender binary but also class distinctions. This middle-class vision of the world is crafted on male bodies through exercise, sweat, diets, supplements and anabolic steroids. One’s appearance becomes a type of bodily capital that can be invested in one’s future. Men seek to institute and expand their prestige through the production of virile physiques; together with other symbols of power, these provide them status in the eyes of men and of women.

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This article was translated from the Portuguese by Alvaro Jarrin.

CHOLITAS AND BEYOND



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Cholitas:

The Revenge of a Generation

A PHOTOESSAY BY DELPHINE BLAST

I'D BEEN IN LA PAZ FOR TWO WEEKS WHEN I FINALLY LOCATED the Hotel Torino, a big colonial hotel where Bolivia's first *cholita* modeling school holds classes. Cholitas are the indigenous Aymara women, strong and powerful despite the affectionate diminutive of the name. Rosario Aguilar Rodríguez, a lawyer and local politician, founded the school about two years ago. She tells me she is proud to wear the pleated skirt known as the "*pollera*," the ample bright skirt typical of the Aymara culture.

As I wait for my interview with Aguilar, fifteen students file in to participate in today's class. They are all beautiful in their bright outfits, with black or brown bowler hats, long black braids, adjusted corsets and puffed skirts and shawls.

The first time I met a cholita was ten years ago in city of Sucre. I was there for tourism; I had always wanted to go to South America and Bolivia was my first trip as a tourist to the new continent. That was in 2006, right after the indigenous leader Evo Morales had been elected president. These Aymara women already impressed me then. They were both tough—faces sometimes weathered by the harsh altiplano climate—and delicate. I knew then, that I had to come back and tell their story.

What was taking place in front of me at the Hotel Torino every Sunday was perhaps unimaginable ten or twenty years ago. Cholitas have suffered a long history of racial and social discrimination. Forced into servitude under colonial rule and later relegated to the margins of society, Bolivia's many indigenous peoples were long excluded from mainstream society. Until the 1990s, wearing a pollera or a poncho to a government office would have been unthinkable. The term "*cholita*" in colloquial Spanish, very pejorative then, referred to a poor country girl, deprived of all her rights. With Morales' election, things changed. Once denied access to public and private spaces such as walking in important squares in La Paz, but also kept out of restaurants or even taxis, many of these elegant women are now permanent fixtures in political and broadcast venues or run profitable businesses of their own. Rosario Aguilar explains, "We must value Evo Morales's influence in this change, reminding me of his decision to promote both parliamentary power and social dignity for the women of the pollera across Bolivia. This contributed to the rise





These photos aim to renew insight into Bolivian womanhood. New identity affirmations reflect the social changes in the country.



of the cholitas, by increasing disposable income and encouraging entrepreneurial spirit amongst the cholita bourgeoisie.”

Now the pollera is not so much associated with rural women of the indigenous communities as it is with a high-end fashion phenomenon, the skirts sported by Aymara and non-Aymara women alike. “Even women who usually wear dresses wear the pollera on special occasions to show off,” Aguilar tells me.

These past few years, I’ve focused on making photographic essays about Latin American women. I wanted to go back to Bolivia to meet the cholitas again, especially the new generation, to understand what it means to be a cholita today. Spending two months in Bolivia, I met dozens of them, first at weekly street festivals and then at the modeling school. I explained my project quite simply and invited them to come and sit for portraits in a studio I had set up in the center of the capital. I usually don’t work with artificial light, but for this series, I wanted to work differently—for me but also for them. I had the chance to set up my studio in one of the most beautiful monuments of the country: the San Francisco Museum. During ten days, the women came to the museum to pose in a studio that I had created with artificial light and traditional and colorful fabrics. I took the portraits against a backdrop of traditional woven Bolivian textiles in colors chosen to echo the bold hues of the *whipala* indigenous flag. In postproduction, I choose to give this background a circular shape, representing thus the Pachamama, the Mother Earth, emblematic of the Bolivian culture.

Some days only one or two cholitas came to the studio, but other days, there were ten! I chose the color of the background to best match their outfits. Many showed up with with elaborate clothes reserved for special occasions such as weddings or festivals. These extraordinary ensembles are shown off at events like parades, or La Paz’s yearly Gran Poder festival, which brings the cities’ wealthy Aymara merchants out in force. Sometimes, some of the jewels women wear are so pricey that they reportedly employ bodyguards to follow them throughout the day. Indeed, no part of their costume comes cheap: a Borsalino—the most famous brand of bowler hat—costs roughly US\$500 and a standard outfit commonly costs the same amount.

No outfit is complete without earrings and a sparkling brooch to fasten the shawl and another adorning the hat. A fine set may run around US\$1600—but the best can be well more than US\$7000.

Bolivia is still one of Latin America’s poorest countries, but its economy has grown rapidly in recent years because of high mineral and gas prices, and the government’s pragmatic economic policies. That growth has stimulated a commercial boom in La Paz and the neighboring city of El Alto, where Aymara merchants—many of them women—play important and lucrative roles. I remember talking with one cholita at the studio who owns a small store in La Paz. She explained to me that in her business, like all others in the fashion industry, she has to change fashion collections quite regularly to keep up to date and lure her clients in a very competitive environment. During one of my first photo sessions at the studio, Patricia, a dentist, remarked that she would never be able to work dressed in traditional garments like the ones she was wearing. If other cholitas came to the studio with more casual garments, the signature bowler hat remained the same. Whatever the case, the trend caught on and, along with the layered skirts and shawls, the Borsalino became an integral part of traditional dress and cultural identity. As legend has it, the popularity of the Borsalino hat arose from a mistake. At the turn of the 20th century, a large shipment of hats was ordered from Europe for railway workers, but they were the wrong color (brown instead of black, which was the fashionable color for gentlemen at the time). Rather than send them back, the hats were given to the local women, the Aymara and Quechua women who had recently migrated to the cities and were in search of an aesthetic and cultural identity. Some versions of the story say the women were told wearing the hat would help with fertility, others claim that a savvy hat merchant marketed them to the women as being all the rage in Europe.

After ten days of shooting, I emerged with a final series of 35 portraits. My goal with this project is to highlight the cholitas’ very special outfits, inspired by Andean traditions, but above all to reveal their femininity, elegance and dignity. I also want to counteract the stereotype of the traditional Bolivian woman. Little by little, the new generation of cholitas has acquired a new status in Bolivian society. Today, they wear the colors of their origins with pride. Between tradition and modernity, they manage to express their cultural heritage, but also their quest for recognition among the urban society.

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The Queen of Sheep

A PHOTOESSAY BY CRISTINA GARCÍA NAVAS

THE QUEEN OF SHEEP BEAUTY PAGEANT IS AN offbeat Colombian beauty contest that parodies other common beauty pageants in the country revolving around local agricultural products or cattle animals. The contestants of this competition, which has been celebrated for fifteen years during the month of July in the central plaza of the town of Nobsa, in the department of Boyacá, are not women, however, but real sheep wearing original costumes made by their owners.

The animals are dressed up as current national soccer and cycling idols, such as James Rodríguez and Nairo Quintana, or as bucolic shepherdesses and sheep clad in traditional regional woolen garments, known as *ruanas*. With their costumes, contestants seek to catch the public's attention, as those who receive the most enthusiastic clapping from the people gathered in the plaza are declared winners. The Queen, Vice-Queen and Princess of Sheep are playfully

personified as women contestants by the presenter, who refers to the "tears in the eyes" of the winner, Catalina, at the moment of being declared the "Universal Queen of Sheep" ("*la reina universal de la oveja*") of 2016. By humanizing sheep, the Queen of Sheep Beauty Contest (*Reinado de la Oveja*) parodies the way women are objectified in beauty pageants, and judged as animals in a breed show. The pageant is, however, followed by a fashion show showcasing the latest and most



accomplished ruana designs, sold at the plaza during the day, whose models are exclusively women and girls, although the garment is traditionally more often worn by men.

This contest is held during the “World Ruana Day” (*Día mundial de la ruana*) to give exposure to the traditional warm woolen Colombian ponchos traditionally worn in the region of Boyaca, and woven by more than 300 artisan families from Nobsa, who earn their living by making these traditional garments.

The Queen of Sheep contest is accompanied by entertainment, humor

and musical shows, as well as by pedagogical activities about the artisanal process of wool production in the region, such as sheep shearing and the display of spinning, weaving, and sewing, usually by women.

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From top left, clockwise: The Queen of Sheep contest in Nobsa, July 2016; the Queen Catalina, dressed in pink in honor of the shirt of the Boyacá cyclist Nairo Quintana; knit woolen weaves depict different geographical areas of Boyacá; ruana fashion show.



Peruvian Pishtacos

Tales of Anti-Aging Cream and Other Rumors **By CAROLINE YEZER**

NEWS STORIES OF CAPTURED DRUG GANGS are so common in Peru that viewers barely noted the television appearance of three prisoners in November 2009. Police had captured the “gang” in the Huánuco jungle—a region known for narcotraffic and drug violence. Police regularly staged these press conferences with hundreds of kilos of half-processed cocaine paste piled like wheels of white cheese: the higher the piles, the more significant the drug bust.

But the Huánuco prisoners stood in front of an almost empty evidence table. Instead of the usual contraband, the table held two Inka Kola soda bottles filled with a yellow liquid too thick to be soda. It was human fat, the officer said, taken from a 27-year-old man that had gone missing that year. The gang allegedly lured the man to the jungle with a fake job offer, then killed him to sell his fat to a European cosmetics company. One prisoner confessed that he was told the company would pay \$15,000 per liter for the fat. He said the company believed that human fat had the power to vanish wrinkles.

Police discovered the remains of the disappeared man's body, and linked it to the prisoners. On television the police declared that the prisoners were part of a global fat-trafficking network operating in Peru. A manhunt was underway for the rest of the “gang,” including two Italians that the police claimed were wanted by Interpol.

For some Peruvian peasants whose bodies showed signs of hard work in the hot sun, the existence of a human fat face cream seemed plausible: it might explain the relatively fatter, less-wrinkled faces of Europeans and North Americans, for example. The story also makes more sense when seen in light of Andean myths. As the manhunt continued, the prosecutor and the public quickly dubbed the gang *pishtacos*—a kind of Andean monster that extracts fat from the bodies of indigenous people, either for its own consumption or



The pishtacos supposedly extracted the fat of people who were not paying attention, drunkards or travelers who had lost their way, veering too far afield of the main village.

as a primary material for certain industrial products.

Myths about the fat-sucking pishtaco circulated in South America during the Conquest. At the time pishtacos were depicted as white men, usually with beards (like the Europeans of that time) and green or blue eyes—armed with a knife for butchering the body. The pishtacos supposedly extracted the fat of people who were not paying attention, drunkards or travelers who had lost their way, veering too far afield of the main village. The pishtaco would attack on the highways at night or in a hidden valley.

Pishtacos have some things in common with Western monsters. Like the vampire that must take human blood to live, pishtacos might need to consume human

fat. But even in the colonial era pishtacos had an entrepreneurial streak. Indigenous people believed that the pishtacos used the fat to help Europeans make items that were beyond the ken of indigenous peoples at the time. For example, the tremendous metal bells tolling in every church in every plaza must have been made with a rare material like human fat. Even today some believe that some of this stolen human fat is needed to run new technology, from airplanes to laptop computers.

Anthropologists theorize that pishtaco rumors express deeply held beliefs about the structure of inequality and race in the Andes. Andrew Canessa and Mary Weismantel, for example, say that pishtacos are a symbol of racial anxieties. Since the pishtacos hover on the edge of the village, in the no-man's-land between the more rural Quechua-speaking highlanders and the more urban mestizos, Canessa argues that the pishtacos' violence serves as a warning of the more abusive side of white or mestizo elites. Parents warn their children about the terrible monster, scaring indigenous highland children into not straying too far outside the village.

The pishtaco's focus on fat also has a unique connection to power in the Andes, one that expresses the exploitative relationship between indigenous peasants and the whiter world. The word for the origin deity, “Wiracocha,” can mean literally, a “lake of fat.” But “wira” could also be a term of respect for powerful, though feared, European land owners in the colonial era. Especially for peasants, body fat is a life force and source of survival in times of crop failure. Stealing fat then is a way of stealing the labor of that body. For indigenous people who survive by manual labor in Peru, the horrifying pishtaco figure expresses the inhumane conditions which powerful mestizos, whites and foreigners force on indigenous bodies: first in the mines and fields of the Conquistadors and now for inadequate rights and compensation.



Opposite page: Al Apaec, Peruvian god of the Moche (300 b.c.-600 a.d.) may be the origin of the pishtaco myth. Above and left: Cartoons relate how pishtacos rob people to convert fat to beauty products.

Rumors about pishtacos are also part of the way that marginalized people contest the social order that subordinates them. As James Scott has shown, rumors and conspiracy theories abound among subgroups of people in situations of drastic inequality—slaves, prisoners or peasants, for example. Such groups may not be able to speak openly about the abuse they experience from superiors due to the risk of punishment. Instead, they communicate in highly coded or veiled ways that become folklore. As white monsters, pishtacos are a shorthand for the seemingly irrational violence perpetrated on indigenous people

by the white or mestizo elite. Rumors about pishtacos and beauty creams describe a world that presents an image of good and prosperity, but secretly maintains itself by consuming the fat of the world's poor.

But just as rumors are used by subordinate groups, they can also be used by elites to dominate. Another interpretation of the beauty cream story might see pishtacos and other conspiracy theories as what Scott called the “arts of domination”—the useful tools for those in power to mislead the public and maintain the status quo. In the long run it was this last theory that was most likely to be part of the 2009 pishtaco scandal.

A few weeks after the police announced their arrests, their story unravelled. Plastic surgeons dismissed the idea that there was a demand for human fat, explaining that elite liposuction clinics in the rich neighborhoods of Lima had plenty of fat that no one needed. Transplant doctors wondered why the criminals so keen to make a profit on a human body would not harvest organs that were in high demand in the illicit transplant market. Political analysts began to suspect the sensationalist “pishtaco gang” was a government created distraction. Stories of the monsters had already pushed news coverage of a state corruption scandal off the front page. Was that the intent all along?

In fact, police were only able to collect evidence that the “gang” killed one person. However, more than sixty people had mysteriously disappeared—a high number for a rural area. The missing people had been presumed dead, but their families had demanded an investigation. Peru's state forces had a history of mass executions during the worst periods of political violence. Might the entire thing have been a coverup of state-sanctioned violence? Or were the disappeared victims of the drug cartels? If so, might police have lied to save face? What better cover up than to blame a gang of pishtacos? A few months later it was clear that the original story was a hoax. But the precise nature of the hoax has yet to be uncovered.

Anthropologist Nancy Scheper Hughes theorized that pishtaco stories—much like organ stealing rumors—tend to arise in times of peace, but after a violent conflict. These rumors attempt to explain and predict the kind of violence faced by peasants today. But they may also be used by the state to hide corruption or neglect, and further consolidate control over citizens.

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Performing Race and Gender in the Andes

Llarqa Aspiy **By MARY ELENA WILHOIT**

RIGHT AFTER ATTENDING MY FIRST LLARQA aspiy celebration in November 2012, I jotted my description of this lively event in my fieldnotes: “We stood in a large circle, passing cristal beer and a small plastic cup, nodding our heads in time with the music. The costumed figures in the center whirled around and around, characters in black-face masks tirelessly hopping in something like an Irish shuffle, their hairy, huge-headed chapo counterparts cracking whips.”

Llarqa aspiy, the clearing of communal drainage ditches followed by celebration, happens during the dry season in Ayacucho, Peru. And while I attended ten such parties during my fieldwork in the northern subdistrict of Huanta in 2012 and 2013, it was a continual source of fresh wonder: the dancers whirled for hours, pantomiming elaborate, sexual scenes of kidnapping and release, dressed in elaborate costumes with black-face, brown-face and white-face masks. Not realizing, initially, the relevance this performance had for my research, I attended primarily to see what the people I was interviewing did for fun.

I was in Ayacucho studying what women did for a living and how they coped, as part of an ongoing study on the



Mural depicting the war in the Museo de Memoria in Ayacucho, run by ANFASEP.

political involvement and labor strategies of landless, single mothers. In keeping with much of the literature on women's experiences in the Global South, I found they struggled to get work, representation and, sometimes, basic resources for their families. Joining friends at llarqa aspiy, however, I eventually realized that celebration illustrated very different dimensions of local social life. With its unusual depictions of desire and availability, llarqa aspiy taught me a lot about particular Andean concepts of race and beauty. Specifically, the portrayal of racialized difference in llarqa aspiy highlighted indigenous women's sexual agency, subverting the neocolonial gendered and racial hierarchies commonly seen in the region.

Rural Ayacucho is a surprising place to examine humor, if not subversion. Best known as the birthplace of the Shining Path communist guerilla organization (PCP) and epicenter of violence during the decades of violence between the PCP and the Peruvian military, it was the site of horrific warfare in the 1980s and 1990s. As violence exploded in the highlands, many scholars working there

fled, along with local families. Since returning, anthropologists have focused on attempts at healing and rebuilding, outmigration and return and the growth of coca production in the VRAEM (Valley of the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers). A geopolitical region in the border area between Ayacucho, Cusco and Apurimac, the VRAEM is currently the largest site of coca production in South America.

With the stakes of racial and class-based divisions made forcefully clear, many Andeanists also focused on the identity politics affecting this rural experience, of social tension in the region. Scholars have documented the racist attitudes white and mestizo Andeans displayed towards indigenous citizens and the silencing of indigenous women, in particular, within patriarchal family and community hierarchies. Many have found Andean women are victims of physical and verbal violence perpetrated by male partners and in-laws. I encountered such inequalities in Ayacucho, and indeed, they became the focus of much of my own research. But performances like llarqa aspiy also suggested a more complex social scenario, at least partially shaped by indigenous



“Negritos” Dancing at llarqa aspiy.

and arguably female autonomy. Its characterizations turned assumptions about agency, virility and desire on end.

Before the dancing begins, *llarqa aspiy* involves a long day of work. The clearing of the ditches is taken care of first, with each family in a given area responsible for sending either one male worker or a sum of money (often the case for widows and single mothers). While men clear out brush and gravel, women cook, preparing noodles, fermented *chichas*, *picantes* or grain stews, and *puka picante*, a traditional dish with beets. Beer is purchased, and a musical band and comedic dance troupe hired. By late afternoon the men finish and people arrive to celebrate.

The subsequent dance performance is the highlight of the day. The troupe hired is usually composed of a set of about twenty standardized characters. Half are dressed as “*caporales*” or “*negritos*,” with black-face masks and red or blue suits with brocade and pictures of saints on the back. Three troupe members dress as a white family in an old-fashioned colonial style. The father wears a pith helmet, pea coat and boots, the mother and daughter floral dresses and blonde wigs, with parasols. These figures wear white-face masks, and are accompanied by an older couple (the *ancianos*) in tan-colored masks and traditional sierra garb. The remaining dancers, the “*chapos*” (*chapo* translates roughly to “shorty”), wear long robes and black masks featuring pig-like noses and large red lips, and carry whips.

These characters dance for hours to *Huayno* music, while crowds watch, drinking and laughing. And with the *negritos* skipping in a soft-shoe style on the outskirts, the family and the *chapos* put on a humorous show with overtly sexual undertones. During their dancing, which consists of energetic skipping in a continuous circle, the white family stays together with interlocked arms, as does the older couple. Soon, however, the *chapos* begin to rob these units of mother, grandmother or sometimes daughter, grabbing the female characters and running off in a manner intended to imply sexual desire and a need for seclusion. The

chapos take the female figures behind a car or rock wall, pretending to hide while staying in view for the audience, and pantomime kissing and other forms of sexual engagement.

As soon as the father or grandfather figures realizes his wife or daughter is gone, he leaps up in apparent rage and runs after the retreating pair. Catching up to the runaways, he kicks both the *chapo* and the erstwhile female in the buttocks (the grandfather uses his cane) and drags his wife or daughter back to the circle. As the evening goes on, the *chapos* also venture out into the audience to snatch women and men watching, who must then be rescued by friends.

Audiences find this hilarious, partly because of the exaggerated body language of the performers as they convey the incompetence (or impotence) of the white husband/father, and also because all of the characters are played by men. The female characters have flat chests and muscular, hairy calves sticking out under their dresses, and are sometimes larger and more intimidating than their male counterparts. Wives are considered particularly funny when über-masculine-looking.

The dancers do not portray all female or male characters uniformly, however. The white mother and daughter are passive; while the blondes are ostensibly desirable, they lack control over their own bodies. They generally act surprised when grabbed, then acquiescent when the *chapo* demonstrates his intentions. This passivity differs significantly from the attitudes of local women, who watch with raucous mirth and judgment, but it also contrasts sharply with the behavior of the indigenous grandmother, a comic, sexual aggressor. The *anciana*, with her wrinkled brown mask, is in fact one of the most sexually voracious characters with considerable initiative. The *chapos*’ relatively rarer attempts to steal the older, darker woman are met with uproarious laughter; inevitably, they snatch her to suddenly mime realization of the mistake they have made in grabbing an aged, indigenous woman instead of the blonde.

They then sometimes thrust her away, but more often shrug and haul her off after all. The elderly figure is excited by being stolen, however, and eager to accompany the *chapo*. In performances considered particularly hilarious, the grandmother may escape the grandfather and steal a *chapo* herself, slinging him over her shoulder to the *chapo*’s apparent horror and the audience’s absolute delight.

In this audacious portrayal, the *anciana* is most like the *chapo*, who threatens the family man’s sexual control. The *chapo*, a challenging figure to analyze, arguably resembles another legendary creature from the highlands: the bear’s son or *ukumari* in Quechua. Bears are important creatures in the Andes, and in most versions of the myth of *ukumari*, a young, highland woman who weaves or herds sheep (markers of femininity) is kidnapped, raped and impregnated by a bear. *Chapos* share their hairiness with the *ukumari*. Given that the mythical bear and the *chapo* are depicted as engaging in sex with human women, however, neither can be assessed as simply representations of animals. Differences between the *chapo* and *ukumari*, in fact, suggest the *chapo* should be considered in terms of representations of black masculinity. Unlike the brown and white figures generally representing the legendary bear, *chapos* (in 2013 at least) were black, often sporting adornments like dreads. And while they were sexual aggressors, their exploits more resembled seductions than rapes.

In spite of a history of white domination and sexual predation, anthropologists, including Laura Moutinho and Peter Wade, have increasingly found that white men are described as sexually unexceptional in Latin America, while black and brown men are described in terms of power and attractiveness. The *chapo*, along these lines, sexually confounds all characters save his *anciana* counterpart as he undermines the power of the white father.

The latter, in contrast, spends the dance reacting to the *chapos*’ exploits, a representation that directly conflicts with ethnographer Billie Jean Isbell’s reference to the white family at a *llarqa*



Cast of Characters from *llarqa aspiy* at the local preschool. Below, author with a young “chapo.”

aspiy event in the 1970s. Isbell, who provided the only other description of *llarqa aspiy* I found, called the white figures *pishtacos*, monsters of Andean myth who rape, castrate, kill and rob indigenous peasants. This characterization was never suggested at the *llarqa aspiys* I attended, where the white man was helpless and cuckolded, exuding the powerless, sexual “opaqueness” more recently assigned to white men in urban Latin America. Occasional references to the *ancianos* as *abuelos* or grandparents also suggested the white family was not separable from those characters; the presence of their own parents shown in brown masks and *polleras* (traditional sweaters) implied the whites may themselves have been, perhaps return migrants who had adopted the accouterments and racial characteristics of urban, white Peru.

Llarqa aspiy is an old tradition, and people seemed unable to explain these gendered differences with their racial components, the uncertain role of the *negritos*, or what the *chapos* represented. While “*negrito*” figures have been described before—ethnomusicologist Heidi Feldman noted that colonial Andean elites had indigenous peasants dress as African slaves to feel like coastal nobles—their role in *llarqa aspiy*, and those of the other characters, have not been discussed by



many ethnographers.

The female figures in *llarqa aspiy* may seem to illustrate the neocolonial relationships between gender and race discussed by Andeanist anthropologists Mary Weismantel and Marisol de la Cadena, among others, including the presumed sexual availability of indigenous women's bodies. For Weismantel, indigenous women's perceived sexual availability is part of a common understanding of social position in post-colonial Latin America in which indigenous women are socially inferior and available for violation by the white men. Weismantel elaborated this concept in her analysis of the categories of *chola* or Indian woman as sexual object

and the *pishtaco* as the white colonial male rapist.

But the *anciana* figures had control over their bodies and their wants. Their behavior excited the women watching, who sometimes entered the dance alongside them, getting drunk, shoving the *chapos* and white characters. With zero apparent docility, these figures ignored the bewildered white family, gallivanting about and dominating the audience's attention with enthusiastic seductions. The *ancianas* of 2013 were no more the *chola* of elite, urban lore than the white father was a *pishtaco*.

Some of these representations may have changed since the 1970s. Imagery from a mural in the local plaza de armas suggests that the *chapo* was once yellow-brown, for example. As rural communities in Ayacucho incorporate new members and return migrants with considerable experience in urban, coastal Peru and internationally, the revitalization of events like *llarqa aspiy* may have coincided with shifts in representation—*chapos* are black; *pishtacos* are an urban/whitened family; youth in the audience wear Bulls jerseys with their woolen caps.

Perhaps the comedic and sexual roles of brown and black figures in the performance illuminate, more than anything else, a desire to reconfigure social hierarchies to fit new realities. But the event also valorizes local people's autonomy and pleasure. It inescapably turns old notions of indigenous women's docility on end, portraying their agentive sexuality in a place long described in patriarchal terms. The performance, mysterious as it remains, insists that indigenous femininities, and perhaps even questions of blackness, are critical components in the way Ayacuchan identity is configured.

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BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL



O. Hugo Benavides *Blackness and Beauty in Ecuador* • Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman *Contesting Beauty*

Jasmine Mitchell *Sensual Not Beautiful*

Blackness and Beauty in Ecuador

The Nation and the Racial Order **By O. HUGO BENAVIDES**

THE GAME WAS SET: THE NATIONAL ECUADORAN soccer team against Switzerland in the initial round robin of the 2014 World Cup. And because of the transcendence of the match, the Ecuadoran embassy in Mexico City had opened its doors to all who wanted to watch the game. However, I remember the score less than the dirty shout of one young angry viewer at one of the Afro-Ecuadoran players at the end of the match, “negro de mierda.” And equally troublesome was that he seemed unaware that his racial epithet could be problematic. Even at a soccer game, this Ecuadoran conflation of race, social expectation and bodily ideals reveals itself.

Ecuador, like most American nation-states, suffers from a long colonial tradition of racism and discrimination. However, what’s interesting about Ecuadoran ideals of beauty are a couple of elements that at first might seem contradictory. The first is how the national soccer team in the last couple of decades has become in its majority composed of Afro-Ecuadoran players. And since 1995, three Afro-Ecuadoran women have garnered the title of Miss Ecuador, and represented the country at the Miss Universe pageant and at other international events.

To be sure, some voices were quick to protest that Afro-Ecuadoran men and women would be representing the nation beyond its national borders. And as one caller to a radio station put it, “If they see this team they will believe that Ecuador is a black country!” And of course it was already implied in her tone that this was not a good thing.

Even though Afro-Ecuadoran beauty is being recognized, these rare acknowledgements are not evidence of a denial of a pervasive and engrained national racism but quite the contrary. These instances of recognition are part of a larger process of racial ambivalence that serves to consolidate Ecuador’s hegemonic national identity.

It’s not sufficient to accuse Ecuador



Gala fashion show.

In 1995, the choice of Mónica Chalá caused a stupor among the general population, symbolized by an embarrassing moment of silence in the theater after her name was announced before a round of polite applause ensued; the announcement in 1997 of another black Miss Ecuador was no less problematic.

of racist attitudes. Rather, we must better understand how race, gender and sexuality, are used to create and normalize colonial legacies and reify a “new old” (Hall 1997) racial order/other. It’s quite difficult to understand the ambiguous underpinnings of a national identity that both denies and also celebrates an ostracized identity, particularly an Afro-Ecuadoran one.

This social paradox was highlighted with the election of Afro-Ecuadoran women three times as Miss Ecuador: Mónica Chalá in 1995, Soraya Hogonaga in 1997 and Lady Mina in 2010 (the first black Miss Colombia, in contrast, was not chosen until 2001). In the first two instances, the audience and the population at large reacted negatively to the judges’ choice to represent beauty and the nation through an Afro-Ecuadoran woman.

In 1995, the choice of Mónica Chalá caused a stupor among the general population, symbolized by an embarrassing moment of silence in the theater after her name was announced before a round of polite applause ensued; the announcement in 1997 of another black Miss Ecuador was no less problematic.

To some degree, Chalá’s selection in 1995 could be rationalized as a fluke, a one-time deal. Many people claimed that the decision made sense because the Miss Universe Pageant was to be held in South Africa, so a black Miss Ecuador would have a better chance of winning (as it happened, the 1996 Miss Universe pageant was moved to Las Vegas). The choice of Soraya Hogonaga in 1997 and Lady Mina in 2010 could not be argued away with such simplistic explanations, however.

These choices clearly mark, not

necessarily a trend, but what I would call a “fault line” on which the Ecuadoran nation has ambiguously secured its national identity. What was merely visible in 1995 became more apparent in 1997 and 2010: that blackness was far from invisible or only otherized, but at times became an essential element of the country’s national identity.

A racial anxiety is readily apparent in the descriptions of the women on Ecuadoran websites:

“[Elected] Miss Ecuador for 1996, born in Quito, [Mónica Chalá] was the first black woman to be elected as National Beauty Queen [Reina Nacional de Belleza]. Criticized by many, when she was 22 years old [sic]. Admired for her courage, loved by her race, Mónica gave a courageous lesson of what it means to be human without judging her race, ethnicity, identity or social class” (Nuestra Belleza 2000; official pageant website).

Soraya Hogonaga is described in similar terms: “[Elected] Miss Ecuador for 1998, she is 1.78 m. tall, an innate elegance, spectacular silhouette, sexy and exotic, in her you have the marvelous mixing of a Latin and African race that make this proud mulatta woman a symbol of Ecuador’s plurinational and multiethnic country” (Nuestra Belleza 2000; official pageant website).

Also, “Lady Mina Lastra is a beauty pageant title holder who won the Miss Ecuador 2010 title and is also the third Afro-Ecuadoran woman to be crowned as such. She is from Guayaquil, was a student of Journalism in the University of Guayaquil during the time of the competition. Although others were

favorite to win the crown during the event Mina received high scores from the judges in the swimsuit and evening gown competition. Mina won because of the final question” (celebs101.com).

The presence of blackness in the nation’s psyche had already been recognized, if not by the selection of a black Miss Ecuador, then by the discussion their selection generated. For many, however, blackness did not capture the true emotional sense of what the Ecuadoran nation embodies.

The discussion about the appropriateness of black women representing the national social body was tempered by concern for the perceived current dictates of race, gender, class and nationhood, which were never exclusively localized but emphasized Ecuador’s position in the larger global economic and cultural market.

The range of discussion, reaction and analysis (including this one) exemplifies the nation’s ambiguous self-image as a nonblack Western entity. Thus, both the selection of the black women as Miss Ecuador and the ensuing debate express the dynamic, complex and fragile construction of Ecuador’s hegemonic national identity.

This argument of the appropriateness or not, and/or the authenticity of having Afro-Ecuadoran bodies represent the nation is also prime on the list when it comes to the national soccer team. However, as with the Miss Ecuador pageant, it never seems to be a problem to have black soccer players represent the nation if they have a winning record. It is also not lost on anybody that only with the arrival of a greater number of Afro-Ecuadoran players on the national team did Ecuador consistently make it to the World Cup.

Of course, even in Ecuador this brings up very problematic global prejudices about the supposedly innate athleticism of the black body (Morales 2014). However, these long-standing stereotypes are immediately abandoned, as the racial epithet in the Ecuadoran embassy in Mexico City indicates, if the team loses; because then the black players become exclusively responsible for the loss. In this fashion, Afro-Ecuadorans are doomed if they do or if they do not, being hailed as naturally





Beauty contests are allowing minorities a place in the global sphere.

superior if they win an athletic event or pageant, or claimed as naturally inferior and stupid if they are not victorious.

In a similar manner, one of the arguments made for the election of black Miss Ecuador winners was that the racial constitution as a minority is by itself no reason to deny them a chance at serving as a national representative. Rather, allowing its minorities a place in the national sphere was a necessary condition, almost a precondition, of Ecuador's inclusion in the field of modern national and contemporary stage. Many Ecuadorans were well aware of global struggles for civil rights in places like the United States and South Africa. But like all global events, these struggles took

on a localized meaning that was clearly expressed in the debates over a black Miss Ecuador.

The international struggles over equal right for minority groups, especially oppressed black populations, were taken to signify the changing dynamics of the global nature of nation-states. Therefore, it was passé to discredit people because of race or, even worse, to deny them a chance at the spotlight in a global event celebrating beauty, friendship and international solidarity (at least in theory).

This particular chance to be modern, to align the nation with what is perceived to be modernity as experienced abroad (a postcolonial syndrome if ever there

was one), was not to be lost, and worst of all, to the traditional conservative groups that have historically held the political power.

As social theorist Jean Muteba Rahier (1998) rightly points out, the fact that the leading "democratic empire" in the world presents gyrating black bodies on music videos as the norm and seems to cherish them at least in sport and entertainment should lead to different ways to renegotiate blackness at the local, supra-regional and global levels.

The selection of the black Misses Ecuador and talented Afro-Ecuadoran footballers sparked a national debate on the appropriate racial representation of the nation, but not about individual





qualifications. The merits of the beauty queens (and soccer players) are denied, belittled, or reified, but never taken into account. Nowhere has the argument been presented that these women, or that the men on the soccer pitch for that matter, might be the best candidates for the position.

This blindness or denial, perhaps much more painfully, defines the difficulty and impossibility of claiming hegemonic national identities when they are clearly based on the exclusion of the human attributes of all those involved. As some would argue, the denial of human experience as nonexistent or irrelevant without a racial discourse to accompany it is one of the most serious limitations on Ecuador's (or any nation-state's) postcolonial existence in the world.

In both the soccer realm and these three instances of an Afro-Miss Ecuador, the black body is not only accepted into the national fold but used to represent the nation to itself and to the foreign others. These instances mark a pervasive racial structure that at times discriminates against blackness but in other instances uses it to constitute the nation. Thus blackness has served not only as a form of distinguishing the other that allows one to see oneself as different but also as a means of self-identification that is not very far removed from the repressed colonial desire of the fetishized dark bodies.

It pleases the nation that half-dressed Afro-Ecuadorian men and women parade themselves in local and faraway stadiums and theatres. In other words, the Afro-Ecuadorian body is being used to imply a racial knowledge that is of ultimate relevance to the nation. And at times discriminated and repressed, while at others celebrated and recognized, an Afro-Ecuadorian identity expresses a dynamic reconfiguration of racial discourses that has multiple significations, some being more difficult to categorize than others.

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A dancer in the Carnaval Ilê Aiyê shows how Afro-aesthetics have become a form of resistance.



Contesting Beauty

Afro-Aesthetics, Beauty Competitions and Racial Resistance in Brazil

By ELIZABETH HORDGE-FREEMAN

IN 2016, THE OFFICIAL MISS BRAZIL BEAUTY PAGEANT competition witnessed an unprecedented moment, as six black Brazilian women from around the country advanced to compete in the national competition. The composition of this cohort alone was enough to spark interest. Never before had this many self-identified black women competed for Miss Brazil. As the top finalists stood together in anticipation of the final decision, the judges announced that 21-year-old Raissa Santana, a black woman, had been selected the winner.

Her tearful pageant win made national and international headlines and, in some ways, served as a reprieve from the mostly negative coverage of 2016 Olympic blunders and the embarrassing political scandals plaguing the nation. Some interpreted Santana's victory as an example of Brazil's ability to embrace multiculturalism and overcome racism. And, while such a conclusion would certainly be an overstatement, what remained true was that her crowning was significant because she was only the second black winner in 30 years! At the end of the pageant, not only had a *negra assumida* (a woman who identifies as black) won the competition, but photos of Raissa posing with the other stunning black contestants became a symbol of black beauty, black womanhood, and a type of Brazilian nationalism that hinted to the possibility that this year was the beginning of a new era, a turning point for race and beauty in Brazil.

By virtue of her win, Santana represented Brazil at the January 2017 Miss Universe pageant. She glided across the stage displaying her tall, thin sculpted frame in a red bikini that contrasted with her brown skin and her voluminous curly hair. As she neared the center stage, the presenter announced that Raissa had stated she was "proud to be the first black woman to represent her country at Miss Universe in thirty years." To some in the audience this was a mere side note, but for others more familiar with racial discourses in Brazil, her explicit reference to racial pride was a clear rupture from the rhetoric of racial democracy that often promoted the


idea that race and racism were insignificant in Brazil. Considering that more than half of the Brazilian population identifies as black or mixed-race, and yet there had been only one other black winner in the competition's history, Santana's comment was an affirmation of racial pride and it also exposed the systemic oppression and institutionalized racism against black Brazilians that traces its roots back to slavery.

Admittedly, slavery and beauty pageants are an unlikely pairing, yet in Brazil's case, they are inextricably connected. It was the presumable 'ugliness' of Africans that Europeans argued was the evidence of their perceived moral depravity and, hence, their suitability for enslavement. Consequently, enslaved black women's bodies were attacked both physically and symbolically. Their bodies were framed as grotesque and dangerous, but they were also simultaneously portrayed as wild, hypersexual and sexually available in order to recast their sexual abuse as a product of their own proclivities. These abuses are well documented. However, the ways in which the realm of beauty and aesthetics functions as another extension of the unique ways that racial oppression impacted black women has seldom been discussed. For example, enslaved black women were required to physically display their debased slave status. Across the Americas, black women were prohibited from wearing shoes and forbidden from using clothing with vibrant colors. They were required to use headscarves to hide their elaborate braided hairstyles, which were deemed threatening because some claimed they diverted attention away from white elite women.

However, rather than accept these restrictive social rules, black women were inventive. They transformed the old rags that they were given for the purpose of covering their hair into exquisite headwraps. They did so as an act of defiance and a type of symbolic resistance against the racial and gender hierarchies that hoped to humiliate, stigmatize and dehumanize them. After 1888, when slavery ended, "whitening" efforts, including the subsidized



Larissa Olivera was chosen as the Ebony Queen (Deusa do Êbano) at the 2016 Carnival.



immigration of millions of Europeans to Brazil, were implemented to minimize the black and brown population. These formal efforts were encouraged by appeals to do away with what was perceived as the physical, cultural and aesthetic inferiority of African heritage.

The excitement about Raissa Santana's 2016 pageant win can only be fully appreciated in the context of Brazil's long history of anti-blackness and also of the many examples of black resistance. For example, decades before Santana's pageant win, organizations such as Ilê Aiyê in Bahia (considered the blackest state in Brazil) had been engaged in racial resistance through the affirmation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture and aesthetics. In fact, only a few months preceding the 2016 Miss Brazil pageant, the Ilê Aiyê Black Beauty Night crowned its Ebony Goddess (*Deusa do Ébano*) in a competition that had garnered the attention of Bahians across the state. For nearly 40 years, Ilê Aiyê has hosted this beauty pageant to promote the self-esteem of black Brazilian women by providing an alternative and attainable standard of beauty that is rooted in the affirmation of blackness. In direct contrast to the Brazilian mainstream that stigmatizes African roots or hypersexualizes the *mulata* (mixed-race woman of African and European descent), Ilê Aiyê's Ebony Goddess competition inverts racialized hierarchies of beauty so that African cultural and physical features (especially dark skin and natural/afro-textured hair) could be exalted.

Additionally, in contrast to the Miss Brazil contest or even Miss Universe, Ilê Aiyê contestants are mothers, students and businesswomen of all body types and reflect the diverse life trajectories of black Brazilian women. The competition makes a concerted effort not to sexualize the bodies of contestants in order to counteract the hyper-sexualization that black women already face in Brazilian society. Hence, they are evaluated largely on a choreographed African dance routine. Their ability to dance is viewed as indicative of their commitment to and familiarity with the cultural elements of African and Afro-Brazilian traditional culture. The pageant is intentionally and

explicitly directed at recognizing the type of black beauty that is often rendered invisible in Brazilian society. The winner of the competition goes on to represent Ilê Aiyê on the coveted Carnaval float, where she becomes a model of beauty particularly for *pretas* (dark-skinned women/girls of African descent) who by seeing the Ebony Goddess, can see themselves more positively.

Despite mainstream victories such as the 2016 Miss Brazil pageant, the beauty of black women in Brazil—especially more African-looking black women—remains largely unrecognized, when not openly degraded, crassly objectified or met with antagonism. In no other way is this made apparent than in the scandal involving the 2013 Globo Carnaval Queen competition in Brazil. Each year, Globo television, the largest television network in Brazil, crowns the “Globeleza” Carnaval Queen, who becomes one of the most popular and beautiful representations of Carnaval. In its history from 1991, there had never been a dark-skinned black woman selected until 2013. That year Nayara Justino, a dark-skinned, black Brazilian woman, was chosen the winner of the Globeleza competition.

Immediately following her selection, she and the network were inundated with viciously racist online attacks from white and black Brazilians alike, who believed that Nayara was simply too dark to be worthy of the Globeleza title. Rather than denounce these racist attacks, the competition stripped Nayara of her crown and bestowed it on another contestant whose lighter skin appearance offered the appropriate sex appeal more palatable for the broader audience. It is in a national and even international context in which light-skin and European features dominate that The Ebony Goddess competition in Bahia, as well as other organized efforts to affirm black beauty, find their significance as deeply meaningful acts of racial resistance. The vast majority of the women who have won the Ebony Goddess competition are *pretas* and, like Nayara, would similarly be considered “too dark” to be beautiful. It is for this reason that Santana's 2016 Miss Brazil win has been met with hope and ambivalence. Her selection leaves

unresolved difficult questions about the extent to which her light brown skin tone allows her to be seen as beautiful.

Ultimately, beauty pageants are not merely contests, but rather they reflect power struggles—of who has the power to dictate who is beautiful, which often translates into whose lives are valuable. Feminist and black activist organizations across Brazil recognize the power inherent in beauty and aesthetics, effectively leveraging the links among self-esteem, black aesthetics and racial identity to organize and demand access to educational, political and economic resources. For example, organizations such as Bamidelê in Paraíba, Brazil launched a successful campaign entitled, “Morena Não, Sou Negra” (I'm not brown-skinned, I'm black), which relied on beautifully photographed images of black Brazilian women with braids and afro-textured hair to de-stigmatize and affirm black identity. Additionally, organized marches including the “First Annual March of Women with Curly Hair” in São Paulo and the “Vai ter Gorda” (There will be Fat Women) social campaign in Bahia include black women as leaders who highlight aesthetic questions about body size, skin color and hair texture in order to catalyze discussions and political mobilization for equality.

Brazil is a country facing uncertain times, but it has also often proven itself to be a “*caixa de surpresas*” (box of surprises). Though the future is uncertain, what has become clear is that the days of only seeing hackneyed stereotypes of black women with their heads hanging low in shame or service are becoming numbered. These images are slowly being replaced by the increasing images of black Brazilian women who bow their heads only to be crowned as queens and Ebony Goddesses.

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Sensual Not Beautiful

The Mulata as Erotic Spectacle **By JASMINE MITCHELL**

WHILE WHITE ACTRESSES AND MODELS STILL dominate beauty and fashion magazines in Brazil, on my last few visits to Brazil, I've noticed that actresses of African descent such as Camila Pitanga and Taís Araújo have also graced the covers. Since 2009, both actresses have also starred in telenovelas. Miss Brazil 2016 is the first black winner since Deise Nunes's crowning in 1986. The 2016 competition had the largest number of black candidates in its history. The dominant conceptualizations of beauty in Brazil are shifting. Erika Moura, the Mulata Globeleza of 2017, did not appear as a bodypainted nude Rio de Janeiro samba dancer, but instead performed in various costumes and dance styles representing a breadth of Brazilian regional cultures.

It's certainly not been this way for very long. In 2001, on my first trip to Brazil, I yearned to find a refuge, a place where my background as a mixed-race black woman from the United States was neither exotic nor fetishized. Relying on Brazil's reputed celebration of racial mixing, I believed that it would become my racial paradise in which brown was beautiful and I would find a resistance to the exclusivity of white U.S. beauty norms.

Instead, I became familiar with a Brazilian saying, "Branca para casar, mulata para fornicar, negra para trabalhar (white women for marriage, *mulata* women for sex, black women for work)."

The elegant beach neighborhood of Copacabana displayed advertisements of "authentic" Brazilian *mulatas* (a woman of mixed African and European descent) featured in a samba show, hinting at brown *mulata* carnality to sex tourists. The newspaper stands, like their U.S. counterparts, were full of magazines with "beautiful" white women on the cover. Likewise, the dominant Brazilian culture and media emphasized white feminine

beauty versus sensuality derived from African origins.

Beauty is not only a matter of visual aesthetics, but intimately tied to notions of race, sexuality, gender and class. The legacies of African slavery and European colonization that prescribed these norms are still evident as white women represent ideals of beauty and chastity, the *mulata* woman represents sensuality and sexual desire, and black women represent manual labor.

THE "MIXED" HISTORY OF THE MULATA AND COLONIAL MYTH-MAKING

Thus, the *mulata* is often thought of as an embodiment of the eroticism of black and white mixing. Laura Moutinho notes in *Razão, Cor e Desejo* that female slaves were imagined as seductresses who initiated sex with white men, rather than their victims (2004). As Donna Goldstein argues in *Laughter Out of Place*, the historical mythmaking of the Brazilian colonial project has interpreted miscegenation through cordiality rather than coercion (2013). This vision of interracial sex during slavery and the fantasy of master-slave relations romanticizes sexual violence and exploitation of women and informs contemporary commodification of *mulata* sexuality.

After the abolition of slavery in 1888, the majority of the population was of African descent. The Brazilian white elite struggled to reconcile the desire for white modernity with its newly emancipated black and mixed-race population that haunted the national racial future and threatened the preservation of racial hierarchies. Brazilian elite and intellectuals yearned to appear on par with Europe and strove to modernize and whiten the population through European immigration and the eventual elimination of nonwhite

bodies. The exclusive valuing of white bodies as beautiful—and hence civilized and superior—reflects a history based on the enslavement of people of African descent and the confiscation of land from indigenous groups.

Nevertheless, a transition was taking place. By the 1930s, the Brazilian state, along with many intellectuals, began to present racial diversity and mixing as a positive characteristic of the Brazilian nation, though still from a dominant white viewpoint. The Brazilian *mulata* became a key symbol of the national identity grounded in *mestiçagem* (racial mixing). Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's influential work *Casa grande e senzala* (1933) suggested that slavery brought different races together in harmony. For Freyre, the object of the *mulata's* seduction is the innocent and inexperienced white male. Through her he gains the corporal knowledge of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness). As Sonia Maria Giacomoni argues in *Mulher e escrava*, this framework functions in part because Freyre constructs interracial sexual relations as a love allegory, ignoring colonial and sexual violence (1988). His vision of a racially harmonious Brazil and the *mulata* as evidence of that history anchored the dominant ideology concerning race, gender, sexuality and national identity. His erotic narrative celebrates the *mulata* as a unifying symbol of *brasilidade*.

Following this logic, Getúlio Vargas's authoritarian regime (1930–1945 and 1950–1954) began to celebrate elements of Afro-Brazilian culture such as samba and *carnaval* as national culture starting in the 1930s, and the tradition continues today. Together the *mulata*, samba, and *carnaval* became intertwined as symbols of national unity and racial democracy. The *carnaval* Samba Queen became a symbol: a dancing *mulata*, wearing high heels and



The iconic *mulata* female body is portrayed in Brazil as glistening brown.

a giant feathered head-dress and little else, personified this notion. For both domestic and foreign consumption, the sexualized samba-dancing *mulata* body became proof of racial harmony.

As a key figure of national and transnational desire, the *mulata* was famed for her corporal functions—sex and dance. Beginning in the 1970s, Brazilian governmental tourism agencies utilized the image of the sexually available *mulata* for the promotion of Brazil as a tourist destination. From the 1970s to the 1990s, white Rio de Janeiro businessman Oswaldo Sargentelli, a self-described

mulatólogo (*mulata* expert), presented samba spectacles of scantily clad dancing women to the Brazilian elite and tourists alike. With the branding of *brasilidade* as a sexual paradise of mulatas, the archetype of the sensual sexually available mulata who dances with abandon became a thematic fixture memorialized in popular Brazilian cultural politics and in the international imagination.

MULATA GLOBELEZA AND CARNAVAL: CRYSTALIZING THE MULATA ICON

Televisual and performance spectacles

show the iconic *mulata* female body in Brazil as glistening, brown, sensuality in the flesh. In 1992, Globo TV's (Brazil's dominant television network) *carnaval*-related programming featured the "Mulata Globeleza," a body-painted nude dancing muse of *carnaval*. The Mulata Globeleza plays on the words Globo (the network station) and beleza (beauty). Bringing audiences across Brazil into *carnaval*, the Mulata Globeleza appears dancing in a continuous array of vignettes. Created by Austrian visual designer Austrian Hans Donner, the Mulata Globeleza dances against a blank screen while swirls of



The Mulata Globeleza transmits sensuality.

glittery paint cover her vaginal area and colorfully adorn her moving frame. With exclusive transmission coverage of *carnaval* programming and Rio de Janeiro's samba school parades, the *mulata* body functions as Globo's commodified network *carnaval* symbol.

Transmitting *mulata* sensuality and fantasy on screen, the Mulata Globeleza also contains colonial memories, the contradictions between an espoused racial democracy and the realities of racial disparities, and the construction of a Brazilian national identity based on the romanticized erotics of racial mixing. Valeria Valenssa, Donner's wife, appeared as the Mulata Globeleza from 1993 to 2005. Lauding the *mulata* as the muse of *carnaval*, Donner says, "a cor do Brasil, que para mim é a mistura das raças, o design perfeito. A mulata é um design de Deus e, por incrível que pareça, não se encontra em lugar algum do mundo" (the color of Brazil, which for me is a racial mixture, the perfect design. The mulata is the design of God, and as incredible as it seems, is found nowhere else in the world). Through the metaphors of eugenic design and unique *brasilidade*, Donner's *mulata*

muse invokes Brazilian racial mixing, yet she remains onscreen as a flat silent symbol. Her objectification and design remain under the authority of a patriarchal order. Furthermore, the celebration is only temporally and spatially constrained as she is validated as a model only during *carnaval* and on the samba stage. After Valenssa's body changed because of her pregnancy, Globo abruptly dismissed her. In dismissing her because she was to become a mother, it became evident that the *mulata* is not the beautiful mother of the nation as white women are projected, but rather is a sexual object.

Beginning in the 1920s, beauty pageants became an instrument of the racialized feminine paragon. White female beauty contestants came to represent norms of beauty, femininity, and citizenship. In selecting contestants for international beauty pageants, Brazil strove to demonstrate its visible progress towards whiteness. Yet other ethnic communities have used pageants as a platform to contest racial exclusion. For example, the Beleza Negra (Black Beauty) contests and the Miss Nikkei beauty pageants for women of Japanese descent open up ethnic boundaries of inclusion. Nonetheless, from fashion magazines to *telenovelas* (popular primetime serial melodramas), the dominant culture holds up white Brazilian women, and secondarily women of color with light skin and Eurocentric features, as women to emulate.

The televisual spectacles of the Mulata Globeleza rooted in the glamour of the samba queen and Miss Brasil competing on the world stage are both symbols of national identity. The Mulata Globeleza does not validate Afro-Brazilian roots, but rather extends the association of the *mulata* as the sexually available seductress. Miss Brasil illustrates Brazilian modernity, civilization and progress all rooted in whiteness. Thus, the *mulata* is an object of illicit desire and Miss Brasil is a model of white beauty. Yet, Brazil operates within a transnational framework of beauty. Brazilian beauty parades on the international fashion model stage, through models such as Gisele Bündchen

and Fernanda Lima. Yet the vast majority of Brazilian models in the international fashion arena come from the three whitest and southern regions of Brazil with significant European immigration. International modeling scouts focus their recruitment efforts there.

BEAUTY, THE MULATA AND THE FUTURE

In the past three years, contradictory shifts in the vision of beauty and sensuality have crystallized in the Miss Brasil 2016 and the Miss Globeleza of 2014. By popular vote, Nayara Justino assumed the position of Miss Globeleza in 2014. Yet, because of her dark skin, a public backlash resulted from both white and black Brazilians calling her "ugly," "a monkey," and "too black" in social media and elsewhere. Promptly replaced by light-skinned Erika Moura, Nayara's dismissal demonstrates the pervasive ideology of *mestiçagem* as an instrument of the whitening rather than the darkening of the nation. For the Mulata Globeleza, it is desirable to be brown, not black (*preta*). Thus the public still holds the colonial mentality of black women as useful only for labor; the *mulata* function is for sex.

With the recent surge in black beauty queens and advertising models, I am hopeful that the *mulata* figure will fade from the national and international imagination as a sexually available object of desire. In order to move from object to subject, the politics of beauty requires a shift from black marginalization to black empowerment.

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Wolf Chase in Chaco: Roaming the haunts of the Aguará Guazú

BY REBECCA GREENBERG

Chaco, Argentina, 11:45 AM.

I shove my clipboard under my arm to roll up my sleeves and try not to wish I was wearing a t-shirt; we are in a momentary lapse from the mosquitos, but I've learned not to push my luck. The rhythmic splash and flatulent squelch of our every step breaks the silence of the palms. I pause on a foundering islet. Beside my mud-caked boot is a single track. It's a bit like a dog's, but the toes loosely encircle the central pad, *cómo pétalos*, as Lucía says. A large smudge at the top reveals the fusion of the two central toepads, a trait unique among canids. Two weeks ago I cried wolf at every dogprint. Now the tracks feel like accomplices, revealing themselves between the shoulder-high grasses of a meadow, or appearing miraculously intact in the cowpath of a *monte*, fine earthen membranes in petrified bloom beside the gargantuan, deep-sunken cloves that batter the narrow trail.

This is the thing with the maned wolf, or *aguará guazú*, as it is here called. With a flaming coat, erectile black mane and the general look of a red fox on stilts, its presence here is just as mythical as its appearance. The Argentine Gran Chaco composes the southern margin of its range, the bulk of the species living in the Brazilian *Cerrado*. Furthermore, the



Lucía Soler (head researcher) and research assistant Juan interview *chaqueños* on their knowledge and most recent sightings of the maned wolf.

aguará roams many Chaco macrohabitats, from *esteros* (swamps and marshes) to *montes* (low forests) to the *palmar-pastizal* (palm savanna) such as the one we were wading in, the signature look of the ecoregion. The canid's use of each of these zones remains obscure. Therein the opportunity for me, when I asked Bahía Blanca University biologist Lucía Soler if I could join her summer research efforts. A few months later, thanks to a Weissman Grant from Harvard College, I was in the thick of Argentina's most remote province with a local research team. To find scats and tracks, we interviewed local *chaqueños* about where they'd last seen the *aguará*. Most had never met a North American and would smile or exclaim in disbelief as I introduced myself. Contemplating their way of life, I felt the same wonder.

Drying laundry festooned houses the size of dorm rooms. Water was heaved from wells. On the dirt roads, entire families would pass on a single horse, the man with a hunting rifle in hand. The men wore *pampero* trousers and sat on saddles lined with woolly sheep hides. Those who knew the *aguará* spoke of the old days when they could receive financial compensation for presenting its leather to local authorities.

I was a bit disconcerted when I first heard this. Yet public opinion has improved with a greater knowledge of the animal's natural history. Distant relative of the fox and wolf, the maned wolf is the only surviving member of its genus. Though it feeds on plants and small prey such as rodents and crustaceans, the *aguará* was traditionally characterized as a livestock thief. Its leather was also highly sought,

believed to guard against riding accidents. According to interviews done in 2004 in a nearby region, many still believed in the *lobizón* (wolf-man) myth. Another goal of the interview process, then, is to help reveal future targets for Lucía's *charlas*: informal, educational talks to the local people highlighting the native predator and its role in the local ecosystem.

In the end, I never did see a maned wolf. I knew the chance was low when I first signed up. But I left the field with the sense that I knew the *aguará*: I'd gotten the opportunity to grasp where it came from. Though the *esteros* and *pastizales* were by no means unimportant, the maned wolf's true "environment" turned out to transcend even the animal's broader ecology. And perhaps the kernel of the notion lay in those little houses flanked by grapefruit trees that sat in endless scrubland, caught in the stories and bits of lore their inhabitants told us over steaming *mate* and sugared *chipá* pastries.

Rebecca Greenberg is a junior at Harvard College studying Organismic & Evolutionary Biology. An aspiring field biologist, she also loves to write about science and her outdoor adventures. On campus, she edits *Ecdysis*, a biannual undergraduate journal dedicated to the artistic expression of science.

Design and Natural Resource Extraction

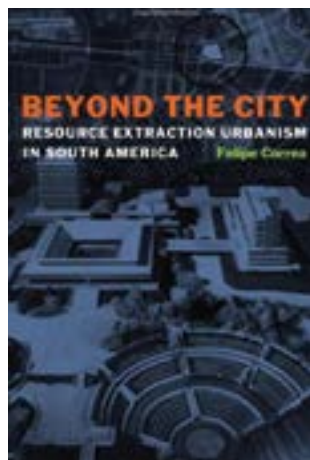
A REVIEW By ANTHONY BEBBINGTON

Beyond the City: Resource Extraction Urbanism in South America

by Felipe Correa
(University of Texas Press, 2016,
166 pp.)

If I had to think of keywords for this intriguing book, they would be “passionate” and “meticulous,” with a third word bringing these two together: “design.” I agreed to review this book as someone interested in the ways in which natural resource extraction has transformed much of Latin America in the last couple of decades; but by the end I realized I was reading it as an erstwhile young British undergraduate studying “Land Economy,” who had been brought up with the utopian aspirations of the United Kingdom’s “new town” movement in the background, and had become intrigued with the relationships between architecture and progressive urban social engineering. In that sense, reading the book was an exercise in being reminded of things that I have come to forget to think about—and this because, I think, the book is also a letter to Latin America about things that too many working in regional development have also forgotten to think about. Let me explain.

Felipe Correa sets this book up by introducing the Initiative for the Integration



of Regional Infrastructure in South America, IIRSA. He presents IIRSA as a project for the wholesale transformation of South America through a deepening of regional integration by means of large-scale road building, river-widening, electrification, port and airport construction and the like. While IIRSA has its own sub-regions, or axes, it provides a larger vision for continental change that will facilitate expanded resource extraction—from the subsoil, the forest and agricultural estate. Another of IIRSA’s effects, largely unintentional, is that it will catalyze new population movements and patterns of urbanization at and between these new frontiers that it opens up. Much of this urbanization will be unplanned, and will go ahead in the absence of any notion of collective design or spatial integrity.

To this relative silence

on urban design in IIRSA Correa brings a good dose of historical reflection. Indeed, this book is an exercise in bringing lessons from Latin American urban history into conversation with the forces that drive—and are supposed to be unleashed by—IIRSA. Not any old history however: Correa asks his readers to recognize that just as IIRSA is an exercise in opening up resource frontiers, much of Latin American urbanization has already been part of the expansion of a resource extraction frontier. This is so both for the coastal cities of European colonization as powers arrived in search of resources, as much as it for the cities built during the expansion inwards from the Atlantic and Pacific coasts in pursuit of new lands, timber, minerals and more. Settlement in Latin America has, he asks us to consider, been more than anything settlement for and catalyzed by resource extraction. And there are lessons to be learned from this history.

Correa argues—and helps the reader recognize—that the ways in which resource extraction and urbanism have been articulated have varied by historical period: or more exactly, by dominant modes of organizing resource extraction, which have changed over time as elements of broader political economic changes. He

organizes his book around five particular experiences of resource extraction urbanism taken from different periods running from the end of the 1800s through to the latter part of the 1900s: the planning of Belo Horizonte in Brazil in the late 19th century; the urban settlement process associated with the nitrate industry in northern Chile in the late 19th and first part of the 20th century; the building of encampments and urban centers accompanying U.S. investment in oil extraction in Venezuela in the mid-20th century; the planning and building out of Ciudad Guyana, also in Venezuela, as part of an effort at organizing the population for resource-based industrialization; and finally, in the second half of the 20th century, the creation of settlements and urban centers associated with the building of a series of hydraulic works in the southern Paraná basin in Brazil.

None of these experiments is presented as a panacea—even when, often, there were utopian ideas that underlay elements of their design. Some of these urban sites were bleak, or became bleak—as in Pinochet’s use of old nitrate towns as camps for political prisoners; many had clear inequalities built by design into their fabric, as in the explicit separation of classes by neighborhood

in Venezuela's oil towns. But—and this *but* seems to me very important—they were *designed*, and in these designs were embedded ideas of modernity and aspirations to social progress (even when embodying inequalities at the same time). Design was being deployed for some sort of modernizing social end. This stands in sharp contrast to IIRSA, also an unrelentingly modern project, but one with an impoverished notion of modernity as little more than massive capital accumulation and the taming of landscapes through large-scale technologies. IIRSA is categorically not development on a human scale, and the urbanizing processes that accompany it are not humanizing—or more precisely, IIRSA makes no conscious effort to manage and design urbanization as a vehicle of human flourishing. Correa does not discuss in any detail these urban projects that accompany—or will accompany—IIRSA, but the stark contrast between the design principles for social progressivism present in the five historical experiences discussed in the book, and the chaotic urbanization linked to contemporary resource frontiers in South America comes through loud and clear.

One of the vehicles that Correa uses—I presume consciously—to convey this contrast is the inclusion of many of his own hand-drawn, detailed sketches of the urban forms and regional patterns elaborated in these

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19th- and 20th-century experiments. The sketches are where this book is most obviously “meticulous” and “passionate.” They are a joy to look at—and also awe-inspiring when one considers the care and the time that went into them. They appear to be a work of passion. He also combines the sketches with archival photos to give a sense of what life was like in the cities and towns whose origins he describes. The photos are also a joy.

This review has dwelt more on the experience of reading this book than on its arguments. But there are also clear arguments here: that urbanization and urban form in Latin America cannot be understood separately from histories of resource extraction; that these histories have, however, been managed and tamed in different ways, given that it is always a social decision as to the sorts of urbanization that will unfold and that in these processes of designing and taming, there has been clear

interaction of ideas over time and across space. Indeed, authors and institutions that are part of the canon of urban and regional development planning are also players in some of the design experiments discussed here: John Friedmann, MIT's and Harvard's Joint Center for Urban Studies, and so on. Another lesson is that design matters, not just for the quality of the urban experience, but also for the adaptability and survival of urban centers. Indeed, the book combines examples of centers that are now dead or dying, and urban centers that have been able to adapt to changing political economy dynamics on the resource frontier.

The most passionate arguments of the book are that design is important, that it can absolutely be progressive, and that the design professions must—*must*—engage with IIRSA and seek to affect the urban and territorial dynamics that the initiative

is catalyzing. These were the book's arguments that took me back to my student discussions of the merits and de-merits of the United Kingdom's new towns, and of design experiments in social housing. For me, at least they have served as a reminder that in these days of the disparaged “expert,” there can still be a place for utopian thinking: because in any case, other actors' “utopias” will prevail, and in the absence of resistance, alternatives and difficult conversations, these other “utopias” will be imposed. All organizations of space have utopian models built into them—and if we do not like them, the challenge thrown down by this book is to do the hard work of learning from history and imagining alternative designs for utopias otherwise.

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Democracy and Party-Building

A REVIEW By SCOTT MAINWARING

Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America edited by Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, Brandon Van Dyck and Jorge Domínguez (Cambridge University Press, 2016)

I started graduate school in September 1978, around the zenith of authoritarianism in Latin America. After the Argentine military coup in 1976, only three of twenty countries in the region were democratic (Costa Rica and Venezuela) or semi-democratic (Colombia). In most of the authoritarian regimes, parties were secondary actors or banned altogether. The literature on parties in the region was not very developed.

Times have changed. Sixteen of the seventeen countries with authoritarian regimes in 1976–77 experienced a regime transition between 1978 and 1990, with Cuba the sole exception. As these transitions unfolded, parties became more important actors. Over time, a substantial literature on parties and party systems emerged. At its best, this scholarship has offered insights to understanding parties in Latin America and has made major theoretical contributions to the broader works on parties and party systems.

Challenges of Party Building in Latin America is an excellent contribution to this literature. It analyzes challenges and successes of party building in the post-1978



wave of democratization in Latin America. It enhances knowledge about conditions for successful party building in an era of great challenges to that enterprise. The authors include an attractive mix of distinguished senior scholars and excellent younger colleagues.

In their introduction, co-editors Steven Levitsky, James Loxton and Brandon Van Dyck make an important theoretical contribution and bring cohesion to the volume as a whole. The introduction, which is essential reading for scholars interested in Latin American politics and for those interested in the comparative study of parties, points out that this is a challenging era for party building. It strikes a nice balance between highlighting the challenges to party building and observing that some successful new parties

have emerged. Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck count eleven parties created in 1978 or thereafter that won at least ten percent of the vote in at least five consecutive lower chamber (or unicameral) elections; these are the “successful” cases of party-building. The vast majority of new parties faltered.

Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck argue that parties are more likely to take root if they build a base of partisans and a solid organization, and if they have a source of organizational cohesion. They carefully ground these claims in established literatures. This is a useful and creative way of thinking about how parties solidify—but it is exceedingly difficult in most contemporary Latin American democracies to build or even retain substantial numbers of committed partisans.

They contend that “extraordinary conflict” is the most fertile breeding ground for major new parties. Sharp conflicts such as “social revolution, civil war, authoritarian repression, and sustained popular mobilization” fosters stronger brands and attachments, creating stronger incentives for building an organization. Sharp conflict also serves as a source of organizational cohesion—the third element conducive to investing in building a party. Conversely, the muffled policy disputes during the short-lived

Washington Consensus frequently gave rise to brand erosion. Routine democratic politics in Latin America in the post-1978 wave of democratization has not given rise to successful new parties, contrary to the expectations of earlier analysts. The introduction successfully weaves in key conclusions from the rest of the volume.

I completely agree that “extraordinary conflict” breeds stronger identities and is fertile ground for party building. But where should we demarcate the boundaries of what constitutes “extraordinary conflict?” There is no doubt that social revolution and civil war qualify, nor that the highly repressive phases of dictatorships usually do. Less clear is whether liberalizing phases of authoritarian regimes that sponsor competitive elections and sustained popular mobilization consistently constitute “extraordinary conflict.”

Spatial constraints make it impossible to describe the contributions of the other sixteen chapters in this hefty volume (550 + xxii pages), so I will single out a few favorites. Noam Lupu, in “Building Party Brands in Argentina and Brazil” (Chapter 3), argues that to be successful, new parties *must* build partisans. He further asserts that a clear brand is a necessary condition for building partisans.

Party consistency and clear programmatic differentiation from their main rivals facilitate the development of strong party brands. These attributes helped the leftist PT (Workers' Party) in Brazil build a clear brand and a strong base of party identifiers. Conversely, in Argentina, FREPASO, a center-left party created in 1994, quickly diluted its brand, leading to a collapse of partisanship and after 2001 to the party's demise.

Although Lupu's work on party brands and brand dilution is superb, Brazil's PSDB (Social Democratic Party) is a contrary case of a new party that was electorally successful without creating many partisans. Since its creation in 1988, it has won the presidency twice (1994 and 1998) and came in second the last four elections (2002–14), and it has consistently captured powerful state governorships. Yet it has always had relatively few party identifiers, consistently below seven percent of survey respondents, raising the question of how some parties achieve extended success despite having few partisans. Social scientists do not have a good answer to this question, which I suspect will become important in the study of Latin American politics because few parties still have large numbers of stable and committed partisans.

In "The Paradox of Adversity: New Left Survival and Collapse in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina" (Chapter 5), Brandon Van Dyck argues that left-of-center parties born under authoritarian

They contend that “extraordinary conflict” is the most fertile breeding ground for major new parties. Sharp conflicts such as “social revolution, civil war, authoritarian repression, and sustained popular mobilization” fosters stronger brands and attachments, creating stronger incentives for building an organization.

regimes tend to invest more in building an organization than those born under democracy. Opposition parties born under authoritarian rule cannot rely on state resources or access to mass media to build support. Van Dyck illustrates the propensity of left-of-center parties created under authoritarian regimes to build organizations with the Workers' Party in Brazil and the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) in Mexico. Both parties experienced long times in the wilderness before they came to power at the national level. Because they invest heavily in building organizations, leftist parties created under liberalizing authoritarian regimes are often more durable and successful than those created under democracies. This is the “paradox of adversity.”

In contrast, because left-of-center parties that quickly rise to govern at the national level have access to resources and pressure to govern, they have little incentive to invest heavily in building an organization. Argentina's FREPASO

illustrates this point. Born under democracy in 1994, it came to power at the national level as part of a coalition in 1999, and flamed out spectacularly when the de la Rúa government (1999–2001) collapsed under the weight of a severe recession and massive protests in December 2001. FREPASO prioritized the use of mass media over the tedium of organization building, and this strategy came to haunt the party.

James Loxton's "Authoritarian Successor Parties and the New Right in Latin America" (Chapter 9), analyzes authoritarian successor parties—"parties that emerge from authoritarian regimes, but that operate after transitions to democracy." His path-breaking analysis explains why all successful new conservative parties in Latin America have been authoritarian successor parties. These parties have built-in assets (an "authoritarian inheritance") that help them compete in democratic regimes—cliente networks, financial resources, a source of cohesion,

territorial organization and a brand name. He illustrates his argument with the cases of ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) in El Salvador and the UDI (Independent Democratic Union) in Chile. Both were created under authoritarian regimes by high-level regime sympathizers, and they enjoyed electoral success after transitions to democracy.

In "Insurgent Successor Parties: Scaling Down to Build a Party after War" (Chapter 10), Alisha C. Holland examines reasons for the wildly different rates of success of insurgent movements that transform themselves into political parties after war. She adds to the evidence that a sharper programmatic identity can be good for building parties. By contrasting the cases of the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) in El Salvador and the AD M-19 (M-19 Democratic Alliance) in Colombia, she argues that insurgent successor parties are more likely to fare well if they don't dilute their brand name by veering sharply to the center. Created as a revolutionary guerrilla front in 1980, the FMLN transformed itself into a party in 1992, becoming one of the most electorally successful leftist parties in Latin American history. In part, it enjoyed success because when it traded bullets for ballots, it preserved its image as a leftist party and eschewed opportunistic alliances. The former Colombian guerrilla organization, AD M-19, fared well in its first two elections, in 1990 and 1991. However, it

quickly disappeared, a victim in part of brand dilution by moving to the center.

Holland argues that focusing on first winning subnational elections can help insurgent successor parties build durable organizations and sustain electoral success. Winning local office can enable former combatants to build a reputation for effective governance and to recruit new supporters without diluting their ideological brand.

Raúl Madrid (Chapter 11) argues that only two ethnic parties, the MAS (Movement Toward Socialism) in Bolivia and the Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik in Ecuador, have been electorally successful in Latin America—the second far less than the MAS. In a region with many deep ethnic divides, why has ethnicity not been more salient in party competition? Madrid suggests that a “low level of ethnic consciousness and the fluidity and ambiguity of race and ethnicity” in Latin America have hindered the building of ethnic parties. The two success cases built strong linkages to social movements that provided organizational and material resources and used broader-based populist appeals as ways of overcoming the difficulties of building ethnic parties.

David Samuels and Cesar Zucco’s “Party Building in Brazil: The Rise of the PT in Perspective” (Chapter 12) focuses on the PT’s success in building partisanship during the 2000s (PT partisans have declined precipitously in the last several years). It partially qualifies Lupu’s argument that clear programmatic

differentiation is essential for branding. By 2010 about a quarter of Brazilian voters were PT identifiers. Contrary to what one might expect based on Lupu, PT identifiers proliferated even as the party moderated considerably after winning the presidency in 2002. Samuels and Zucco attribute this success to the institutionalization of grass-roots participation combined with programmatic centralization. The PT retained a strong brand despite moving toward the center and forging governing alliances with conservative parties—a point that Jorge Domínguez also makes in his insightful concluding chapter, emphasizing that many successful Latin American parties have thrived for a long time despite brand dilution (pp. 477–479). The steep decline in PT partisans since 2012, however, suggests that Lupu is also correct: the combination of brand dilution and bad governing performance is often fatal for partisanship.

“Why No Party-Building in Peru?” by Steven Levitsky and Mauricio Zavaleta (Chapter 15) offers a fascinating analysis of an extreme case of party weakness. One might expect parties of presidents who have presided over robust economic growth and sharp declines in poverty to use these successes to cultivate loyalties among citizens and to build an organization. The Peruvian case defies these expectations. Peruvian politicians have adopted party-less strategies and mechanisms to gain electoral success. They are free agents with little attachments

to party labels.

Levitsky and Zavaleta argue that Peru *is* a democracy without parties. Although I believe that it overstates the case to say that there are *no* parties in Peru, the evidence of party weakness is unassailable. The Peruvian case raises questions about the conventional wisdom regarding the indispensability of parties for democracy: must parties still create modern democracy, and is democracy still unthinkable without parties? Still, consistent with the conventional assumption, Levitsky and Zavaleta note some dysfunctional consequences of party weakness, such as hampered accountability and representation.

Most of the chapters in *Challenges of Party-Building* are very good and the best are outstanding, but if I have one criticism of this agenda-setting volume, it is that the editors might have made the difficult decision to trim a couple of those that they judged to be lesser contributions. The book is excellent, but I’m not sure that we needed 17 chapters and 550 pages.

Scott Mainwaring is the Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor for Brazil Studies at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Parts of this review were previously published in Scott Mainwaring, “Party System Institutionalization, Party Collapse and Party Building,” Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics, vol. 51, no. 4 (2016), pp. 691–716.

Being Dominican

A REVIEW By PEDRO REINA-PÉREZ

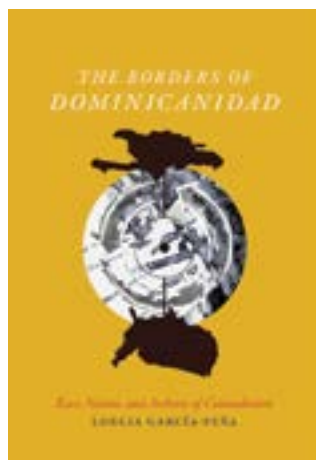
The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation and the Archives of Contradiction by Lorgia Garcia-Peña (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016, 274 pages)

This book by Harvard Professor Lorgia Garcia-Peña embarks on an ambitious exploration of the limits of Dominican identity seen through the prism of culture, geography and race. Specifically, it focuses on the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Caribbean nations that share the island of Hispaniola and many other symbolic spaces. They share a history of colonialism and exploitation that binds them closely, on top of political and economic rivalries that afflict them. As the author says, “*The Borders of Dominicanity* brings Dominicanism from the footnote to the center of the page, insisting on the impact of dictions on the national and racial identity of a people. The stories and histories upheld by nations and their dominant archive create marginality through acts of inclusion, violence and silencing. Though these official stories of exclusion are influential in bordering the nation and shaping national identity, this book also shows they are always contested, negotiated and redefined through

contradictions.”

This work looks at the migratory experience of Dominicans who, upon arriving in the United States, face the racialization of their identity according to U.S. codes that are considerably different to their own notions. When Dominicans emigrate to the United States they are classified as black—a category that in their homeland is reserved for Haitians—and as immigrants, producing a double exclusion that conditions their possibilities of mobility and integration. Thus, the Dominicans’ identity combines three aspects (Dominican Republic/Haiti/United States) as they claim a place in the United States.

For purposes of this interpretation, the modern history of the Dominican Republic is analyzed in the context of the 19th-century imperial expansion of the United States, which included the purchase of French Louisiana, the annexation of Mexico, and the conquest of Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii and Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War. These events created a new reality based on the integration of new colonized subjects into American society. The Dominican Republic is considered by many in the United States to be superior to Haiti in racial terms. New categories emerged from this view, differentiating one country from the other, and they



extend in complex ways until today. In the words of the author, the book “is a project of recovering and historicizing knowledge interruptions through what I call contradictions, dictions-stories, narratives and speech acts that go against the hegemonic version of national identity and against the mode of analysis we tend to value historically accurate or what most people call truth.”

In its approach to the topic of Dominicanism, the book reminds us of other books about the Spanish Antilles, such as those by Fernando Ortiz on Cuba and Ricardo Alegría on Puerto Rico, that sought to identify the essential cultural elements of these countries. Both Cuba and Puerto Rico have experienced important migratory waves that have given life to communities in the diaspora that inform their notions of identity. However, the situation of people in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as inhabitants of the same

Dominicans emigrate to the United States and are classified as black—a category that in their birth land is reserved for Haitians—and as immigrants, producing a double exclusion that conditions their possibilities of mobility and integration. Thus, a trilogy of margins define Dominicans.

island, is exceptional.

An essential part of the analysis is the concept of “Nié,” attributed to the artist Josefina Báez, that conceives the flagless nation of Nié as a space of dual marginality, neither here nor there. The ambiguity explains the unstable terrain where different categories are built and rebuilt. The author studies how Dominicans negotiate the plural and unequal categories that inform social, historical and economic notions. In addition, she explores the ways in which the body becomes a zone of conflict through the sexualization of the individual, especially in the context of the migrant who arrives in the United States. Each of these experiences builds an archive, and that archive is studied to understand how it is constituted and updated. In addition, not only actions but also omissions are also considered, as affirmations and silences are central to understanding how the production of knowledge

is colonized. “This book suggests the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic as a locus for understanding how race and nation intersect in the bordering of a people. As people and ideas travel back and forth, borders are reaffirmed, contested and redefined through official and unofficial actions.

The book’s exploration of identity, body and borders also extends beyond Dominicans to the notion of Latino/a, a construct of social and historical processes in the United States that render Latinos/as as foreigners. By making this clear, the book is a contribution to the emancipation of translocal histories and of individuals as well.

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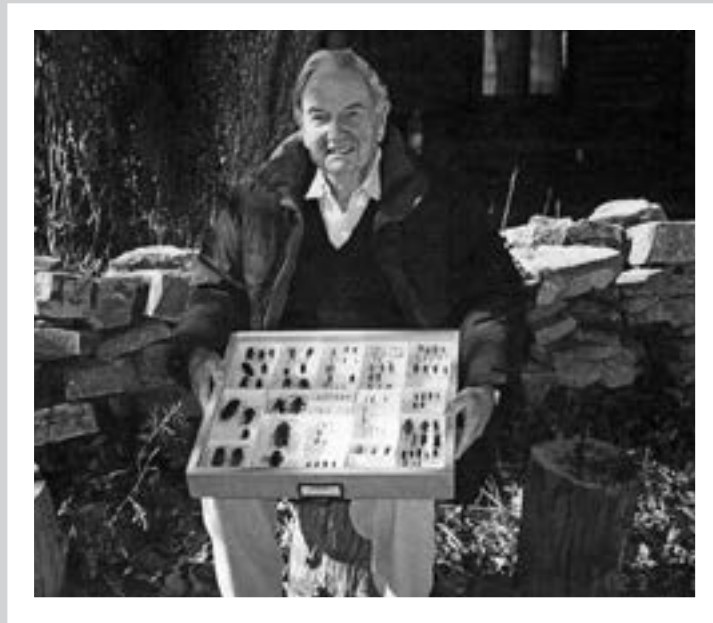
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David Rockefeller in 1993 with beetles collected at the Southwestern Research Station in Portal, AZ. Beetles were one of Rockefeller's lifelong passions. His collection of 150,000 specimens will be donated to Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology, where David earned an A in the entomology course as a young undergraduate.



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