

Boyd

## Southern Beauty

Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South

The southern beauty is alive and well in the twenty-first century American South — and so is a particular silence. All across the region young white women routinely turn-in renditions of femininity more in keeping with nineteenth century gender ideals than twenty-first. In popular performances that gestured toward the southern past, the southern beauty performed choreography of exclusion, consolidating privilege and reiterating race in a near absence of scrutiny. Chances are, you never noticed. That is precisely the point. Southern Beauty explains the long presence of this unlikely figure — and the widespread studied attempts over time to ignore her. Built on a foundation of ethnographic—including more than sixty interviews—and historical research, Southern Beauty explores three popular feminine rituals: sorority rush, the beauty pageant, and an Old South tourist production. All feature a cast of southern beauties with distinct traces of an imagined past. Boyd investigates these rituals for their cultural memory work over time — for the role they played in promoting particular remembrances of the southern past.

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