

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of this book is the authors' careful attention to ethical considerations in storytelling, especially as the field of public history moves beyond the idea of "shared authority" to fuller collaborations (xii). How do we bring the many voices of our community into the museum? What do community collaborators want to see in museums? How do we create a climate of mutual respect for all? Since these kinds of collaborations are so new, several authors question how they will evolve over time and wonder how to sustain these partnerships in the future. As we all know, the process of creating more equitable collaborations is complicated and messy, but reading about the experiences of these practitioners offers inspiration. The authors who share their challenges and mistakes provide especially poignant lessons, as do those essays which include collaborator comments or engage community members to help author the chapter (see chapter 19). *Storytelling in Museums* will encourage those working in and with museums to continue to strive to make their institutions more relevant and to engage their communities in creative ways during this time of tremendous challenge and change in the field.

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Southern Beauty: Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South by Elizabeth Bronwyn Boyd. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2022. 210 pp.; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; hardcover, \$114.95; paperback, \$29.95.

Southern Beauty: Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South, by Elizabeth Bronwyn Boyd, explores the direct link between memory creation and feminine activities in the South. Boyd utilizes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on an array of different methods and source materials including archival research, ethnographic research, in-person observation, and oral history interviews. She conducted a total of sixty-one interviews with oral history narrators between the years 1997 and 2006 and observed backstage rehearsals and preliminary rounds of beauty pageant competitions. *Southern Beauty* focuses on the staunch rituals of sorority rush, beauty pageants, and Old South productions, arguing that each space enforces both feminine performance and racially driven silences. The book is full of rigorous research and insightful analysis communicated in clear prose and avoids technical jargon. Boyd does an exceptional job of storytelling, immersing the reader in the intricate worlds of the sorority house, the beauty pageant stage, and the Natchez Garden Club performance.

Her introduction explains the origins of the mythical "Southern Lady" and explains why this lore is important to southern culture. Boyd acknowledges the gaps in historical scholarship, especially the legacy surrounding southern white womanhood. Furthermore, she argues that these rituals perpetuate stereotypes of whiteness into the twenty-first century. She leverages this analysis as an opportunity for

a nuanced discussion regarding southern feminine spaces, which she accomplishes through centering one of these three gender rituals in each of her chapters.

Chapter 1, entitled “Sister Act,” expands on the ritual of sorority rush throughout the South and specifically at the University of Mississippi, colloquially known as Ole Miss. Boyd vividly describes the rush process, using images of sorority rush events over many decades to exemplify the continuity of the ritual throughout the twentieth century. She then connects the racialized, exclusionary practice of sorority rush to the idealized southern white women’s stereotype (the Southern Lady) created in the South post–Reconstruction to elicit control over Black southerners. Initially, southern state universities were segregated, and so sorority chapters at white schools only accepted white women. However, as desegregation made its way to southern campuses, Black women remained excluded from rush acceptance. Boyd explains that this occurred through rush expectations, especially those “demanding the performance of a fairly specific rendition of White womanhood . . . strong yet demure, chaste but fertile, ethereal yet grounded, knowing but silent” (41). Essentially, by linking the performance of southern womanhood to the gendered ritual of sorority rush, Boyd shines a light on the implicit racial bias and exclusionary tactics built into the ritual. Exclusion was not limited to race alone—rushees could be cut based on socioeconomic factors, religion, and family history. She reads between the lines, calling out inferred knowledge from the rush process. One poignant example of this from the text is a “member’s claim that their house was the ‘only thing close to the feeling you get at Christmas’” (51). Boyd analyzes how this statement illustrates the presumption “that non-Christian rushees were not anticipated” (51). In her examination of university sororities, she ultimately argues that by demanding a polished performance of white womanhood, the sorority rush process perpetuates the mythology of the Southern lady.

The second chapter, entitled “Miss Demeanor” looks at the culture surrounding southern beauty pageants. Boyd argues that beauty pageants were not only a popular activity, but a regional pastime. She explicitly links the performance of beauty pageants to the creation of a unique southern culture and the post–Civil War creation of the Lost Cause narrative. Boyd states, “pageantry provided a ritual means for beleaguered southerners to justify their social structure. Through romantic pomp, southerners made visual and bodily connections between themselves and the ideals and hierarchies structuring southern society” (77). She further argues that pageant culture and performances, in their association with the South, perpetuate regionalism enacted through regular participation. Linking to the perpetuation of racial bias within sorority rush discussed in the first chapter, Boyd states, “Just as the successful sorority rushee knows how to perform the lady and the belle, in turn, the successful pageant contestant embodied two halves of a whole—knowledgeable contender and innocent contestant” (97). The space provided a literal stage to display idealized white womanhood. Again, she highlights embedded racism and exclusionary tactics woven into pageant culture. Beauty pageants were segregated, and Boyd focuses on the white-only pageant space.

However, she also acknowledges how African American southerners created their own pageant competitions. Though the acknowledgement of Black beauty pageants is welcome within the white-centric analysis of performing womanhood, Boyd does not actively unpack the purpose and role pageants played in the Black community. Though the scope of the book centers on the process of perpetuating white womanhood, the inclusion of Black beauty pageants would have provided Black southerners with some agency in the creation of southern femininity. Boyd links the physical body of the white southern woman to the myth-making process. As she states, “in beauty pageants the expectations associated with White southern womanhood—virtue, purity, deference—were mapped and measured on the body. For contestants, the pageant represented a highly visible stage for demonstrating the ability not only to embody a viable likeness of White southern womanhood but to perform a competitive one at that” (71). In reality, “as the Lost Cause gained momentum, these ritual celebrations increasingly featured the figure of the White Lady, raised up by men, women, and veteran’s groups alike as the emblem of Southern civilization” (79). She ultimately ties the Lost Cause narrative and the transformation of the Southern Lady post-Reconstruction to the process of literally placing white womanhood on a pageant pedestal.

“Hoop Dreams,” the book’s third chapter, focuses on one specific heritage performance: the Natchez Garden Club’s Confederate Pageant. The club rehearsed and performed the production between 1932 and 2014. Boyd describes the performance as an amalgamation of Old South tourist production and debutante ball. She argues that a central goal of the production was the creation of public memory. This process happened by enacting antebellum mythology through consistent and repetitive pageant performance. She highlights the types of women involved in this cultural production, from retired baby boomers seeking the familiarity and nostalgia found in the Natchez performance, to newcomers who saw the production as an opportunity to embed themselves into the local community. It is in this chapter that Boyd explicitly acknowledges the complication of historical reenactment for a tourist gaze. Her nuanced analysis of the complicated self-image of the Confederate Pageant reminds public historians of the created and the actual perpetuated narratives surrounding public memory. For example, the garden club downplayed the myth-making role and historical authority entrenched in their production, instead passing it off as tourist entertainment. However, Boyd argues that even without explicitly stating it as an aim, the pageant performance shaped public memory and perpetuated the Lost Cause narrative through the Confederate Pageant’s staunch commitment to a narrow image of southern culture.

Overall, Elizabeth Browyn Boyd’s choice to explore the nuanced link between gender ritual and public performance enhances the scholarship of both gender performance and the perpetuation of Old South mythology. She clearly links the process of embedding cultural memory into society to the gendered spaces of sorority rush, Southern beauty pageants, and the Natchez Garden Club production. Boyd’s interdisciplinary approach furthers scholarship in southern history, public

history, performance studies, women and gender studies, and memory studies. She successfully pulls meaning from these ephemeral spaces of transitory activities. By linking each performance to the perpetuation of racial hierarchy and southern culture, Boyd places the blame of southern mythology and the hope of future change onto the actions of southern white women, asking, “what sort of trauma has their frivolity obscured? The power is theirs to alter the performance, share the memory, and change the South” (146). Academics and practicing public historians will benefit from her nuanced interpretations on perpetuating the Lost Cause narrative through gendered rituals. I see the opportunity for future scholarship to build upon this work, perhaps exploring Black beauty culture in the South and how that relates to the creation of regionalism.

Elizabeth Gonzalez, Independent Historian

Inventing Idaho: The Gem State's Eccentric Shape by Keith Petersen. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2022. ix+217 pp.; illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index; paperback, \$26.95.

As an Idaho native, I always found myself wondering why my home state is shaped so strangely. Local kids paying a visit to the library were frequently met with large-scale illustrations depicting the state as the silhouette of a woman, the profile of an old man, or other whimsical oddities. However, it wasn't until well beyond my time as a graduate student that the story of how Idaho got its shape became a bit clearer. To this end, *Inventing Idaho: The Gem State's Eccentric Shape* is a welcome addition to existing Idaho history literature. Written by former Idaho State Historian Keith Petersen, this piece examines a concept that has only been addressed in passing by other historians.

Inventing Idaho thoughtfully contributes to the story of the Gem State through the synthesis of engaging primary sources and builds upon Petersen's expertise as state historian. The narrative, lively and dynamic in its approach, thoughtfully describes how Idaho earned its bizarre shape by analyzing the growing pains associated with expansion. Those in need of a comprehensive, readable text describing the nature of Idaho's political, social, and geographic complexity should look no further than Petersen's recent publication. However, although *Inventing Idaho* provides meaningful additions to the historiography, the piece's contributions to public history are varied. Although Petersen's lively writing and array of primary sources demonstrate excellence in historical research, the book lacks the diversity of voices and opinions essential to the public history discipline.

As state historian, Keith Petersen served as the expert on the history of Idaho for over a decade. Throughout his career, Petersen traveled to every corner of the state, gathering stories of its rich past along the way. *Inventing Idaho* is a tangible reflection of both Petersen's professional legacy and personal passions for geography, the