



The University of
the West Indies
Institute for Gender and
Development Studies



CARIBBEAN REVIEW OF GENDER STUDIES

A Journal of Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism

Issue 6 – 2012

Fictions of the Past: Staging Indianness, Identity and Sexuality Among Young Women in Indo-Trinidadian Beauty Pageants

Anusha Ragbir

Abstract

Beauty contests are places where cultural meanings are produced, consumed *and* rejected, where local and global, ethnic and national, national and international cultures and structures of power are engaged in their most trivial but vital aspects (Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996, 8).

“The contestants paraded around the stage in a very slow, graceful manner which also matched the slow, languorous music that accompanied this segment. The girls displayed their outfits in numerous ways; some held up the heavily decorated shawls at intervals, some made hand movements that seemed to display their clothing while also appearing to add to their grace on stage. Smiles were transfixed on their faces, as they were told to constantly remember to smile, and many of them gave very coy, playful, demure facial expressions. All of the traditional garments revealed the arms of the contestants, while most displayed a bit of the stomach and back. For this segment, most of the contestants wore saris, which were fitted tightly around their bodies, revealing their figures” (Ragbir 2010, 73).

Ragbir, Anusha. 2012. Fictions of the Past: Staging Indianness, Identity and Sexuality Among Young Women in Indo-Trinidadian Beauty Pageants. *CRGS*, no. 6, ed. Gabrielle Hosein and Lisa Outar, pp. 1-21.