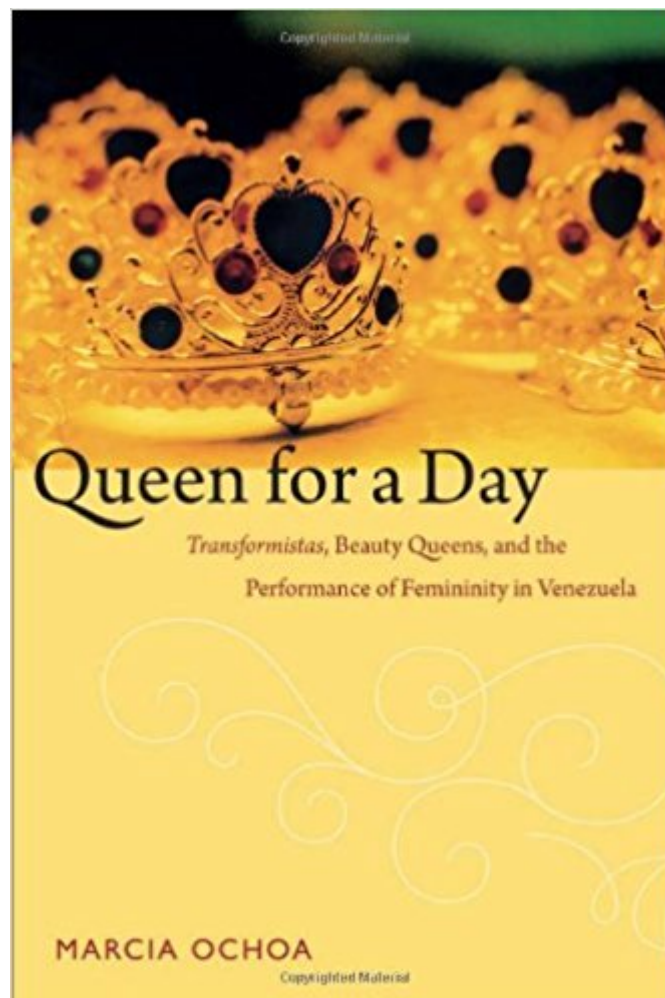




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# Queen For A Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, And The Performance Of Femininity In Venezuela (Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited By Jack Halberstam And Lisa Lowe)





## Synopsis

*Queen for a Day* connects the logic of Venezuelan modernity with the production of a national femininity. In this ethnography, Marcia Ochoa considers how femininities are produced, performed, and consumed in the mass-media spectacles of international beauty pageants, on the runways of the Miss Venezuela contest, on the well-traveled Caracas avenue where transgender women (transformistas) project themselves into the urban imaginary, and on the bodies of both transformistas and beauty pageant contestants (misses). Placing transformistas and misses in the same analytic frame enables Ochoa to delve deeply into complex questions of media and spectacle, gender and sexuality, race and class, and self-fashioning and identity in Venezuela. Beauty pageants play an outsized role in Venezuela. The country has won more international beauty contests than any other. The femininity performed by Venezuelan women in high-profile, widely viewed pageants defines a kind of national femininity. Ochoa argues that as transformistas and misses work to achieve the bodies, clothing and makeup styles, and postures and gestures of this national femininity, they come to embody Venezuelan modernity.

## Book Information

Series: Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe

Paperback: 296 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (May 19, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822356260

ISBN-13: 978-0822356264

Product Dimensions: 9 x 7 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #720,803 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in [Books > History > Americas > South America > Venezuela](#) #277 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Transgender](#) #367 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian > History](#)

## Customer Reviews

"A gifted ethnographer with an eye for detail, Marcia Ochoa weaves rich narratives of contemporary Venezuela and its complex cultural geography of gendered, sexualized, racialized, and classed bodies and selves caught in the pursuit of alluring beauty and accomplished femininity. *Queen for a Day* is a queer diasporic ethnography that complicates practices of cultural consumption and

production within the shifting terrains of normality and ‘abnormality,’ the nation and the global, and home and away.” (Martin F. Manalansan IV, author of *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*)“Marcia Ochoa’s engaging ethnographic meditation on femininity in Venezuela focuses on gays, women, and transgendered people who perform glamour in beauty pageants and as sex workers on the street called Avenida Libertador. This work reveals the social forces as well as the plastic surgery and injections that produce desired female bodies. Ochoa’s world of high frivolity that many do not take seriously reveals much about Venezuela that cannot be learned from the earnest realm of male politics.” (Renato Rosaldo, author of *The Day of Shelly’s Death: The Poetry and Ethnography of Grief*)“In this book Ochoa gathers several different and distinctive scales of analysis, from international fashion circuits and the role of mass media to the body, the smallest unit of analysis. At the same time, public discourses about beauty and femininity are examined in an interrelated way, along with problems of race, modernity, and discourses about the nation. One of the most attractive aspects of this book is its inscription of all these problems in the long process of modernity’s production, with the purpose of searching beyond interpersonal relationships. As an anthropologist, Ochoa constructs a clearheaded ethnography of mass media, beauty, and femininity that includes a careful description of the physical space of the streets and city of Caracas overall.” (Mirta Zaida Lobato *Hispanic American Historical Review*)“[A] complex ethnological study of the phenomenon of la belleza venezolana (Venezuelan beauty). . . . This work does an admirable job in its efforts to provide both the context of the performance of femininity and beauty in Venezuela and more specifics on the experience of male-bodied, feminine people in the nation.” (Elizabeth Gackstetter Nichols *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*)“This ethnographically and theoretically rich book is relevant to gender studies, queer studies, performance studies, urban studies, and Latin American studies and is a model of applied, committed, and interested research.” (Colleen Ballerino Cohen *American Anthropologist* 2015-01-01)“Queen for a Day is groundbreaking in its consideration of transgender and hegemonic bodies within the same analytic framework, and it offers new ways of understanding performativity, spectacle, gender and power. It has clear implications on many fields due to Ochoa’s thorough engagement with scholarship on coloniality, modernity, race, beauty, performativity, spectacle, gender, corporeality, materiality, transgender studies, and queer diasporic studies.” (Carson Morris *The Latin Americanist* 2015-11-01)“Queen for a Day dazzlingly sashays from the tulle and satin dresses of the Miss Venezuela beauty contest to the very specific sites in Caracas where sex and desire transform, reimagine, and reorder the city. . . . All the different strands that Ochoa offers for a study

of femininity and gender in Venezuela that is not simply a study of 'gendered behavior'; can be seen as unrelated to each other, but one of the most important underpinnings of Ochoa's book is that it is rightly founded upon a faith in connection, in communication, across social classes spread throughout the country of Venezuela. (José Quiroga Transgender Studies Quarterly 2016-05-01) "Queen for a Day makes important contributions to our understanding of how colonial legacies at the local, national, and international levels along with contemporary mass media and other technologies shape cultural politics and the possibilities for change in our post-modern, global world." (Susan Besse Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe 2016-12-01)

Marcia Ochoa is Associate Professor of Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Fascinating ethnography of Venezuelan trans women and beauty queens.

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