

God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and Around the Bible

Stephen Moore



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God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and Around the Bible Stephen Moore *God's Beauty Parlor* opens the Bible to the contested body of critical commentary on sex and sexuality known as queer theory and to masculinity studies. Through a series of dazzling rereadings staged not only in God's beauty parlor, but also in God's boudoir, locker room, and war room, the author pursues the themes of homoeroticism, masculinity, beauty, and violence through such texts as the Song of Songs, the Gospels, the Letter to the Romans, and the Book of Revelation.

He ponders such matters as the curious place of the Song of Songs in the history of sexuality, or how an apparent paean to male-female love became a pretext for literary cross-dressing for legions of male Jewish and Christian commentators; Jesus' face and physique in relation to ideologies of beauty, ranging from the patristic era, when the "earthly" Jesus was regularly represented as ugly, to the contemporary global culture industry, with its trademark equation of looks with worth; the gendered and sexual substratum of Paul's doctrine of salvation embedded in his most influential epistle—not least his gendering of righteousness as masculine and sin as feminine; and the intimate imbrication of masculinity and mass death in Revelation, a book about war making men making war-making men . . . some of whom also happen to be gods.

God's Beauty Parlor is an exhilarating attempt to bring some of the most significant currents in contemporary gender studies to bear on a text that, even in the post-Christian West, remains the ultimate cultural icon, cipher, and shibboleth.

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