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The Cunning Of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities And The Making Of Australian Multiculturalism (Politics, History, And Culture)



Synopsis

The Cunning of Recognition is an exploration of liberal multiculturalism from the perspective of Australian indigenous social life. Elizabeth A. Povinelli argues that the multicultural legacy of colonialism perpetuates unequal systems of power, not by demanding that colonized subjects identify with their colonizers but by demanding that they identify with an impossible standard of authentic traditional culture. Povinelli draws on seventeen years of ethnographic research among northwest coast indigenous people and her own experience participating in land claims, as well as on public records, legal debates, and anthropological archives to examine how multicultural forms of recognition work to reinforce liberal regimes rather than to open them up to a true cultural democracy. The Cunning of Recognition argues that the inequity of liberal forms of multiculturalism arises not from its weak ethical commitment to difference but from its strongest vision of a new national cohesion. In the end, Australia is revealed as an exemplary site for studying the social effects of the liberal multicultural imaginary: much earlier than the United States and in response to very different geopolitical conditions, Australian nationalism renounced the ideal of a unitary European tradition and embraced cultural and social diversity. While addressing larger theoretical debates in critical anthropology, political theory, cultural studies, and liberal theory, The Cunning of Recognition demonstrates that the impact of the globalization of liberal forms of government can only be truly understood by examining its concrete—and not just philosophical—effects on the world.

Book Information

Series: Politics, History, and Culture

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (July 19, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822328682

ISBN-13: 978-0822328681

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.9 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #759,469 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Australian & Oceanian #2861 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Anthropology #5506 in Books > Politics & Social

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the star is still rising of this brilliant anthropologist and superb writer. her academic quality is indisputable, her charm inescapable, and her wit sincere as it is sharp.

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