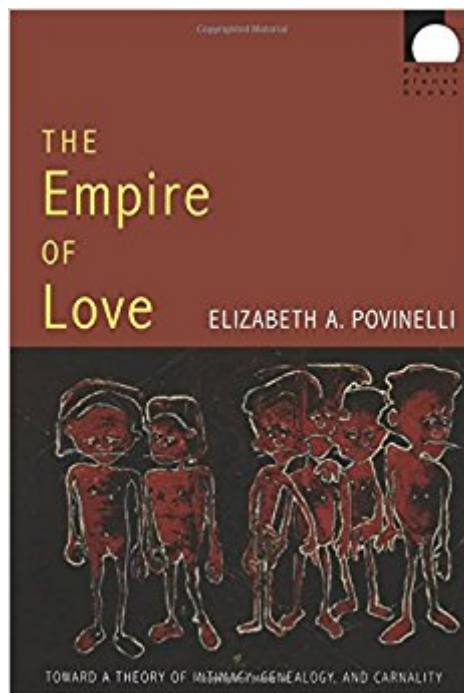




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The Empire Of Love: Toward A Theory Of Intimacy, Genealogy, And Carnality (Public Planet Books)



Synopsis

In *The Empire of Love* anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli reflects on a set of ethical and normative claims about the governance of love, sociality, and the body that circulates in liberal settler colonies such as the United States and Australia. She boldly theorizes intimate relations as pivotal sites where liberal logics and aspirations absorbed through settler imperialism are manifest, where discourses of self-sovereignty, social constraint, and value converge. For more than twenty years, Povinelli has traveled to the social worlds of indigenous men and women living at Belyuen, a small community in the Northern Territory of Australia. More recently she has moved across communities of alternative progressive queer movements in the United States, particularly those who identify as radical faeries. In this book she traces how liberal binary concepts of individual freedom and social constraint influence understandings of intimacy in these two worlds. At the same time, she describes alternative models of social relations within each group in order to highlight modes of intimacy that transcend a reductive choice between freedom and constraint. Shifting focus away from identities toward the social matrices out of which identities and divisions emerge, Povinelli offers a framework for thinking through such issues as what counts as sexuality and which forms of intimate social relations result in the distribution of rights, recognition, and resources, and which do not. In *The Empire of Love* Povinelli calls for, and begins to formulate, a politics of “thick life,” a way of representing social life nuanced enough to meet the density and variation of actual social worlds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Elizabeth A. Povinelli’s *Empire of Love* is a stunning achievement, tracking the intricate connections between forms of liberal governance and forms of love in the contemporary world. Povinelli renounces any temptation to take the highway of thought and instead takes the reader on a journey in which worlds known and less-known are slowly and patiently explored and shared. This is a book that touches the soul.”

• Veena Das, Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University

“What a brilliant book. Elizabeth A. Povinelli strives to make all the intellectual moves that need to be made today: connecting studies of sexuality to other phenomena that seem to be unrelated, thus opening out what gets to count as ‘sexuality’; thinking about sexuality in relation to liberal governance; and moving us beyond the binary opposition of freedom versus constraint. These arguments are refreshing as well as pressing for our times.”

• Lisa Rofel, author of *Desiring China*

“Writing in this exquisite and courageous book of her experiences of community at opposite ends of the world, Elizabeth A. Povinelli meditates here on everything that both links and divides Australian indigenes from North American radical faeries—and, in so doing, provides us with an astonishing account of embodied intimacies caught between global discourses of individual freedom and social constraint.”

• Andrew Parker, editor of *The Philosopher and His Poor* by Jacques Rancière

“What a brilliant book. Elizabeth A. Povinelli strives to make all the intellectual moves that need to be made today: connecting studies of sexuality to other phenomena that seem to be unrelated, thus opening out what gets to count as ‘sexuality’; thinking about sexuality in relation to liberal governance; and moving us beyond the binary opposition of freedom versus constraint. These arguments are refreshing as well as pressing for our times.”-- Lisa Rofel, author of “Desiring China”

Like many titles in queer theory, this promises something sexy and provocative but delivers a rather dry selection of theory driven essays. The first, a discussion of the social and ethnic ramifications of an infectious sore on the author’s shoulder, has to do with disease, racial identity, medical policy and, only remotely, with sex. The essay is impressionistic, offering an array of concerns rather than a coherent argument. The remainder of the book has to do with the interection of indigenous and gay and lesbian subcultures, not exactly a central concern of our day but an area of some anthropological interest. The writing is sometimes personal and rather moving, often drearily academic.

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