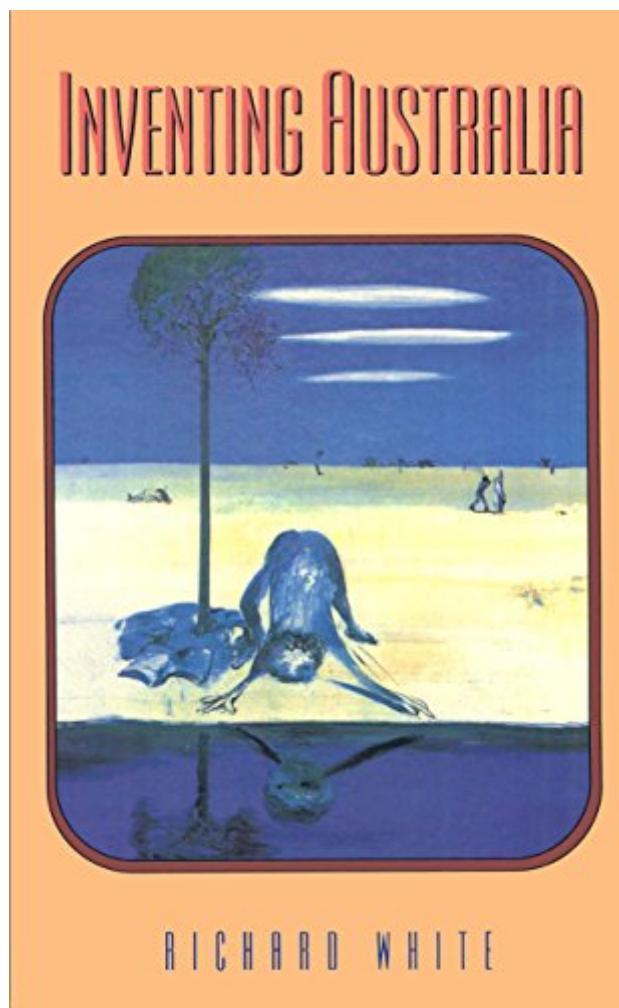The book was found

Inventing Australia (Australian Experience)

Synopsis

'White sets himself a most ambitious task, and he goes remarkably far to achieving his goals. Very few books tell so much about Australia, with elegance and concision, as does his' - Professor Michael Roe'Stimulating and informative. an antidote to the cultural cringe' - Canberra Times'To be Australian': what can that mean? Inventing Australia sets out to find the answers by tracing the images we have used to describe our land and our people - the convict hell, the workingman's paradise, the Bush legend, the 'typical' Australian from the shearer to the Bondi lifesaver, the land of opportunity, the small rich industrial country, the multicultural society.The book argues that these images, rather than describing an especially Australian reality, grow out of assumptions about nature, race, class, democracy, sex and empire, and are 'invented' to serve the interests of particular groups.There have been many books about Australia's national identity; this is the first to place the discussion within an historical context to explain how Australians' views of themselves change and why these views change in the way they do.

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Customer Reviews

White's book is a fascinating read for anyone who has ever thought about the question of national identity and how the rest of the world perceives a particular country's people. While White's focus is the Australian identity and the images associated with it, what he has to say applies to the rest of us, as well. His argument is that national identity changes with different ages, but that the images which become those identities, for instance, the World War I "digger" or the "convict" identity which have at different times been seen as "Australian identity," are really the constructions of people in power who believe a particular identity will further their own or the country's aims. The image, then, of the Australian "digger," the tough-minded, uncomplaining and stalwart soldier of World War I, is an identity that was necessary and helpful to those in power as they tried to convince people that Australians had a duty to fight and were good at it. The book may not be as interesting to those who are unfamiliar with these Australian images of themselves, but it is not hard to apply it to American identity. Our own images of ourselves as an "immigrant," "wealthy industrialist," or "pioneering" society are just as vital to our perception of our own history, and just as challenged by White's thesis. However, the book may be most interesting to those who have spent time outside of their own culture or have had experiences being stereotyped because of their nationality. This is a challenging and useful book for anyone who has ever wondered about cultural issues and how national identity is influencing policy and history.

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