

historians and anthropologists may find crucial insight in her close-readings of W.E.H. Stanner's anthropological writings and Rita Huggins' personal correspondence with the Superintendent at Cherbourg, William Porteus Semple, in the 1940s. Nevertheless, Ravenscroft's deftness at moving between contemporary Australian literature, literary criticism and the colonial archive is one of the book's strengths. Yet, for a book that deploys the 'visual field of race' as its central theme, it is disappointing that only one chapter — Chapter 8: 'Matron always carried a small whip' — explores photographs of Indigenous people. In this chapter, Ravenscroft examines the work of amateur white photographer, Agnes Semple, who took a keen interest in photographing Indigenous people at Cherbourg mission in the 1920s and 1930s. Ravenscroft's argument that Semple's highly staged photographs offer whites a scene of 'their own narcissism' (p. 128), most clearly encapsulate the book's argument, which would have been most useful at the beginning of the book, rather than towards the end.

For those interested in exploring questions of how white settler subjects can engage with writing about and by Indigenous people, this book is certainly worth reading. The theoretical questions that Ravenscroft raises will enable this book to have a wide appeal to many scholars, especially those with an interest in postcolonial studies, critical race and whiteness studies, and of course, literary studies. The case studies in the book and Ravenscroft's focus on close-readings rather than on theory, makes this book easy to read and accessible to many readers.

## References

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# Belonging Together: Dealing With the Politics of Disenchantment in Australian Indigenous Policy

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At the outset I wish to welcome this book. It is a timely intervention in the Indigenous policy debate. Admittedly there is very little in the book about education, nevertheless it does provide us with the means for a critical engagement with policy, which is badly needed in this the post-ATSIC and Native title era.

The key question that Sullivan sets out to address is: 'How can we move towards a public policy philosophy in which Aboriginal and settler interests converge, without either perpetuating second-class separate development in the name of self-determination or effacing Aboriginal differences?' (pp. 1–2).

What is crucial for me here is the framing of Aboriginal and settler. It is a welcome reminder to all non-Indigenous Australians that we are indeed settlers and that there is a particular dynamic to the ways in which settlers tend to recognise and therefore behave towards the Indigenous populations that they conquer and dispossess. Central to that dynamic I would argue is the tendency to see the dispossessed as the Despised or Pitiful/Childlike or Comical or Resented or Exotic Other.

Sullivan outlines three main policy approaches — assimilation, self-determination and what he terms 'norma-

lisation', which tends to swerve towards assimilation. The arguments around self-determination currently receive a good deal of attention. This has led to a 'disenchantment' among the public with regard to Indigenous policy. It would be naïve here to believe that powerful interests have not played a role in creating that same disenchantment. Nevertheless, the continuation of Indigenous disadvantage constitutes a powerful argument for policy change.

I would like to add that the process of disenchantment, especially in the field of education, generally takes the form of the narrative 'we have tried everything and nothing works'. I have always found this a strange position because, as Hattie's research shows, almost everything works in education. Generally, however, it is fairly easy to get to the ideological basis of the narrative by asking 'Well, what exactly have you tried?' and then refusing to take 'everything' as an answer.

There are several mentions of Sutton's (2009) *The Politics of Suffering* as there might well be, given its public prominence. Sullivan, in my opinion, is overly kind to Sutton's book. To my mind, Sutton's work is marred above all by a total absence of any attempt to answer what should be done. The advocacy of culture as a resource raises the

spectre of cultural relativism, and battle lines are speedily drawn up. One has only to think of the Hindmarsh Island Affair to understand that Indigenous cultural issues can prove deeply problematic for settlers. Here, one of the book's real contributions is the thinking through of the principle of 'subsidiarity' (pp. 13–14) and how it leads to a policy of Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians living together. Subsidiarity does not demand cultural homogeneity, nor does it tolerate practices that have serious and widespread consequences. So there is cultural autonomy, but this is relative and not absolute.

Among the book's other valuable contributions is an eye-opening account of policy in Indigenous affairs (Chapter 3). Here I am very sympathetic to Sullivan's complaint about central direction and insensitivity to local needs. Indeed, that realisation informed my decision to support the setting up of NARIS (National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools).

I should also mention that Sullivan casts an anthropologist's cold eye on the bureaucracy and gives us a very good exegesis of its nature and role (Chapter 6). Yet thankfully, Sullivan is no simple-minded 'bureaucrat basher'. In his discussion, for instance, of accountability and government/citizen relations, he quite rightly points to the weakening of the role of the state bureaucracy and the strengthening of the role of the government. For Sullivan, the state has been sidelined and its role usurped by ministers of the government (p. 67). What we now have is the dominance of the ideology of managerialism, where the government acts like a board of directors and Aboriginal Australians (and the rest of us) are imagined as 'subjects of governance' (p. 67).

One of the most controversial arguments in the book is the recommendation to cut the states out of Indigenous

policy and for the Commonwealth to enter into partnerships with regional players in local government. Sullivan would do this by quarantining some of the money due to the states from the GST and add this to the federal government's own contributions (p. 116). Such a policy would work, in my opinion, but it is likely to meet with considerable outrage and resistance of a dog in the manger kind from the states. Nonetheless, I cannot see an obvious refutation of Sullivan's point that:

*The states' prominence within the regulatory and administrative framework of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs has not been well matched with commitment of their own funding and programs, and they need to overcome a legacy of mistrust and general atrophy of expertise since the end of the native welfare regimes around the time of the 1967 referendum. (p. 112)*

In summary then, I believe this is a valuable book. It contains much that is thought provoking and also some real gems, such as the description of the operation of Native title and the hoops that Indigenous Australians have to go through to get their entitlements. I loved the statement that 'a prominent Maori judge has likened this to a car wreck in which the victims can only claim compensation if they have not been harmed' (p. 25). Finally, I would like to endorse Sullivan's closing plea for a new sense of belonging together, for only then will we have a national identity which is not hollow at the core.

## Reference

Sutton, P. (2009). *The politics of suffering: Indigenous Australia and the end of the liberal consensus*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press.