

Eras Journal - Editorial, Edition Nine

Editorial

Welcome to the ninth edition of *Eras*, the on-line journal edited and produced by postgraduate students from the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. *Eras* publishes double-refereed articles and reviews in the disciplines of History, Religion and Theology, Archaeology and Ancient History as well as studies in Jewish Civilisation, written by current and recently-completed postgraduate students. The aim of *Eras* is to showcase outstanding postgraduate research from Australia and abroad in an international forum and to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue across the fields. The ninth edition of *Eras*, once again, presents a diverse mix of articles that attests to the breadth and depth of high quality research currently being undertaken by postgraduate students in Australia and overseas.

In the wake of the Labor Party's federal election victory last weekend, it is hoped that the Prime Minister-elect will restore good relations between the university community and the Federal Government. There are many blotches on the former government's record on higher education policy. The tertiary sector has been chronically under-funded and the government, motivated by politics, has interfered in the allocation of research grants. John Howard has tried to silence the voices of dissent on university campuses across Australia by passing the voluntary student unionism legislation. The Howard Government also increased tuition fees and introduced full up-front fees, both of which have undermined meritocracy within higher education in Australia and reinforced the user-pays philosophy.

Members of the history profession will be specifically concerned with the role that our new leader will play in the ongoing 'History Wars'. At this early stage, it is hard to gauge the position of the Rudd Government on the debate surrounding the nature and focus of Australia's national history. In an election campaign plagued by (arguably) empty rhetorical assertions of an 'education revolution' and other vague promises, I believe that my hesitation is not unfounded. Kevin Rudd has committed his government to standardising the school curriculum, including history subjects, across the nation. This reform will stimulate further debate on what sort of history should be taught in schools. It remains unclear as to whether Rudd will attempt to extend his executive influence on the researching and teaching of Australian history beyond the high school classroom. It is hoped that the incoming government will abandon the demand that Australian history should advance a story of national achievement, heroism and glory, and accept the inherent complexities and challenges of recreating Australia's past. The approach of the Labor Party toward reconciliation with indigenous Australians may be instructive. Their decision not to hold a referendum on Aboriginal reconciliation in the first term, if at all, and instead offer a formal apology to Aboriginal Australians for past injustices, represents a compromised policy position. It suggests that the new government may adopt a pragmatic, haphazard and populist approach to understanding and confronting the nation's history.

In Edition Nine of *Eras*, two contributors present fascinating articles on two distinct areas of twentieth century Australian history: the internment of enemy aliens and political dissidents during the Second World War, and the settlement of migrants in Australia. Beginning our ninth edition, Georgina Fitzpatrick examines internment of Inky Stephensen, the founder of the Australia First Movement, who was incarcerated for placing his loyalties to Australia ahead of the war aims of Britain and America. Using the large collection of letters between Stephensen and his wife, Fitzpatrick reconstructs the experiences of daily life in the camps and explores the differences between the three major camps of Liverpool, Loveday and Tatura. Fitzpatrick suggests that the archive of Stephensen's letters to his wife permits the construction of a social history of internment during the war, unlike other genres of survivor testimony that use public and semi-public documents as evidence.

Following on from Fitzpatrick, Selena Costa-Pinto, a Monash postgraduate student and former *Eras* editorial committee member, explores how Indian women migrants in Melbourne construct identity and exercise agency in the diaspora. Using narrative evidence from oral testimonies, Costa-Pinto focuses on three areas: the impact of technology, the assignment of household activities and socio-cultural reproduction. Costa-Pinto argues that identities of Indian migrant women in Melbourne are fluid, adapting to day-to-day situations and social settings, which emphasise 'practical symbolism'. She concludes that Indian migrant women in Melbourne create coherence in their lives through flexibility, autonomy and self-reflexivity.

Moving to Australia's near neighbours, Stanislaw Meyer's article offers a fascinating investigation into the rhetoric of assimilation ideology in the remote islands of Miyako and Yaeyama. By analysing the local newspapers from these islands in the pre-Second World War period, Meyer demonstrates that, in the author's words, 'the advocates of assimilation skilfully exploited the issue of local identities and the complex relations between Okinawa and the remote islands', whereby the local people were encouraged to present themselves as more 'civilised' and 'modern' than Okinawans. Meyer concludes that the narratives in the newspapers of the remote islands appropriated the notion of 'Japanese-ness' (that was also connected to modernity) as a means by which to negotiate one's status within Okinawa.

In the final article of Edition Nine, Cedric Beidatsch examines the writings of Paracelsus, the prolific Renaissance writer, physician and alchemist. In the article, Beidatsch presents a lively and engaging account of Paracelsus' ideas about marriage and love. According to Paracelsus' doctrine of marriage, love between a man and a woman was not only the foundation for marriage, but also signified God's blessing and was the predestination of marriage itself.

Alongside the refereed articles, readers will find a number of reviews on recent publications written by postgraduate students from the School of Historical Studies at Monash University and other institutions. In subsequent editions, *Eras* would like to continue to publish reviews written by postgraduate students outside of our home

university and we welcome the submission of reviews (on books, films and exhibitions) and reports on conferences throughout the year.

The publication of *Eras* is completely dependent on the voluntary contributions and tireless hard work of the editorial committee. I would like to thank in particular last year's Editor-in-Chief, Richard Scully, for his support and assistance throughout the year and my Reviews Editor, Lachlan Grant. Thanks to Caroline Hubschmann, Meighen Katz, Ben Suelzle and Claire Tanner for their hard work, especially in the final, frenzied few weeks of editing. Thanks should also go to Adrian Regan for his involvement during the first half of the year. I am grateful for the assistance and advice offered by former editorial members who remain important members of the *Eras* family and ensure its continued success.

The continued publication of *Eras* would not be possible without the support of the academic staff in the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. The ongoing support of the academic supervisors of editorial committee members, the postgraduate research coordinator, David Garrioch, the postgraduate administrator, Rosemary Johnston and the Head of School, Barbara Caine, is greatly appreciated. The editorial committee is also grateful for the technical support provided by ArtsIT .

As a fully referred journal, *Eras* is indebted to the anonymous reviewers who voluntarily assess the quality of the articles submitted to the journal. The editorial committee appreciates that the quality of our journal is heavily reliant on the good will of established academics contributing their time and expertise to review articles for us. We recognise that this is a rather thankless job and we appreciate the time and effort involved in providing postgraduate students and emerging scholars with constructive and insightful feedback.

The goal of *Eras* is to facilitate and to stimulate discussion within the academic community and with the wider public. *Eras* welcomes comments from readers on any of the refereed articles or reviews and we will happily post reasonable comments on our discussion webpage.

We hope you enjoy *Eras* Edition Nine.

Rachel Stevens

(Editor-in-Chief, *Eras* Journal).