



East Timor, René Girard and Neocolonial Violence

Scapegoating as Australian Policy

Susan Connelly

"Connelly cuts through the modes of avoidance that shield us from seeing what we do not want to see – that East Timor's crime was its very existence. Her discussion of scapegoating and its associated ancient and modern myths is an unsettling but valuable experience." *Clinton Fernandes, Professor of International and Political Studies, University of New South Wales, Australia*

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In a new historical interpretation of the relationship between Australia and East Timor, Susan Connelly draws on the mimetic theory of René Girard to show how the East Timorese people were scapegoated by Australian foreign policy during the 20th century. Charting key developments in East Timor's history and applying three aspects of Girard's framework – the scapegoat, texts of persecution and conversion – Connelly reveals Australia's mimetic dependence on Indonesia and other nations for security. She argues that Australia's complicity in the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor perpetuated the sacrifice of the Timorese people as victims, thus calling into question the traditional Australian values of egalitarianism and fairness. Connelly also examines the embryonic conversion process apparent in levels of recognition of the innocent victim and of the Australian role in East Timor's suffering, as well as the consequent effects on Australian self-perception. Emphasising Girardian considerations of fear, suffering, forgiveness and conversion, this book offers a fresh perspective on Australian and Timorese relations that in turn sheds light on the origins and operations of human violence.

Susan Connelly is a Sister of St Joseph who has taught in both Catholic and State Schools in Australia. She has worked with the people of East Timor for over 20 years in cultural support and advocacy for justice.



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