

**July 26, 10:30~11:30: Plenary Lecture I, Room 2-1702**

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## **“Historical Verticality vs Transversality”**

### **Key words**

foreign convicts, transportation, multiculturalism

### **Abstract**

Multiculturalism is by no means a phenomenon of our contemporary world. Prior to the British invasion of Australia, we know Aboriginal peoples were multicultural in every sense of the word. The pervasive myth/belief that the convicts were *all* from the British Isles still prevails. After many years of research in the field with other scholars, we now know that this is not the case. Although the non-British or non-Anglo-Celtic convicts were not a large number they were indeed significant and a clear indication of exactly how easy it was for a non-British subject to become entangled in the pernicious sprawling net of the British Empire. Although the numbers of non-British convicts do not run into thousands they are significant enough to add another layer of meaning and historical narrative to the history of Convict Australia. Thus, from 1788 to the end of transportation the seeds of multicultural Australia were already being sewn. The title of my paper intends to reveal how a “vertical” reading of history, together with decades of silence regarding convict history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has led to a perpetuation of the myth of the Founding Fathers/Mothers of White Australia being of British descent. From the mid twentieth century onwards a “transversal” reading across the board and tenacious study and questioning of documents has led to the revelation of a large corps of foreign convicts from Canada to Finland, China to India, and a whole host of Europeans, to name only a few.

Any discussion of non-British convicts must first approach the matter of intercolonial transportation, something that came fully to light during the latter half of the twentieth century. The British not only transported convicts or undesirables to Australia. History has well documented the shipping of convicts to America, but the involvement of the imperial machine in systematically transporting individuals between its different possessions with no regard to the consequences or suffering involved is yet another dark side to the history of the British Empire.

I want to look at the cases of Spanish, Hispanic, Portuguese convicts and those of Sephardi descent who found themselves caught in the mesh of the British legal system and sentenced to transportation. Given that the Sephardim, their history and their very special theological, emotional and ancestral ties with Spain are relatively unknown to many, I will briefly examine their history which justifies their inclusion as convicts of both Spanish and Sephardic descent. The presence of Ashkenazi Jews in the First Fleet has been documented but the presence of the Sephardim has remained an untold story for a very long time. I will then discuss how these

particular convicts fit into the wider category of non-British convicts in Australia before answering the following questions. Who were these people? How did they come to be transported? Why might some people with clearly British names claim that they are not of British descent but rather, for example, Spanish? One can only hypothesise with regard to the latter case, but there are various areas that can be examined such as the British involvement in the production of sherry, port and madeira involving Spain, Portugal and Madeira. One has also to consider the War of Independence as it is known in Spain, more familiar to us as the Peninsula or Napoleonic Wars.

Finally, given the statistics regarding foreign convicts, I would argue that convict transportation enabled the first stage of Australian multiculturalism. Furthermore, these foreign convicts' stories must be told as part of Australian colonial history and one of the many origins of multiculturalism in white Australia

### **BALLYN, Susan**

Prof. Emerita Sue BALLYN Received her doctorate in English Philology from Barcelona University in 1985. She joined the English and German Philology staff in 1982. Her main teaching areas have been English poetry from the Renaissance to contemporary times, postcolonial studies with a special emphasis on Asia Pacific and Australia in particular. Her PhD was the first in Spain on Australian Literature. She founded the Australian Studies Centre at the university which was recognised as an official Barcelona University Centre in 2000. Her main area of research has been convict studies since the 1990s with multiple publications and more recently, she has become a member of a research group studying ageing in Literature at Lleida University under the acronym Dedal-Lit which has now become part of a large European project SiforAge. For this project she is collecting oral life histories of women over seventy years of age. She currently holds the position of Prof. Emerita and Founder/Co-director at the Australian Studies Centre at Barcelona University. Her most recent publications include: Frost, L., S. Ballyn "Unhappy daughter of a celebrity: Sophia Mendoza", *Convict Lives at the Launceston Female Factory* Hobart Convict Women's Press 2013, S. Ballyn "Power and dialogue: symbiotic relations between female convicts and surgeon superintendents" *The Tapestry of the Creative Word in the Literatures in English* Eds Antonella Riem Natale, Maria Renata Dolce, Stefano Mercanti e Caterina Colomba Udine Forum Edritice Universitaria Udinese 2014, S. Ballyn "Ruby Langford Ginibi: memories of an amazing woman" *JEASA Journal of the European Association for Studies on Australia* 2012, S. Ballyn, "Bruce and exploding coffee perculators" *Coolabah* 2012. At present she is writing five short biographies of the Spanish and Portuguese convicts: Mary Ann Davies, Jane Harris, Susan Hunn, Margaret Paterson and Esther Botibol for publication in a forthcoming encyclopedia and a full biography of Catherine, Helen and Charles McGhie for publication in a forthcoming book, both to be published by the Convict Women's Press.