

*Introduction*

**Sue Ballyn**

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The papers collected in this volume are the result of the conference held in Barcelona in July 2008 titled *Myth, History and Memory*. This volume, however, carries a slightly different title for two reasons. Firstly, many authors have extended or rewritten their papers after the conference and thus various shifts have taken place. Secondly, during the conference, the actual theme was taken up in so many different ways by people coming in from different perspectives that the collection needed to be re-titled. As a result this volume is now presented as *Perspectives: Myth, History and Memory* which allows for the many and diverse papers and lines of thought that emerged during the conference and afterwards.

*Coolabah*, No.2, now online, is a witness to the sculpture exhibition which accompanied the conference. Each sculptor has written about how he or she approached the theme and developed the sculptures for the exhibition.

The refereeing of the papers also took a different form from the usual process used by the journal. First of all the chairs presiding sessions were asked to give their opinions regarding the papers they had heard. Then further refereeing was done by the journal's Editorial Board and in some cases the papers were sent to another member of the Board for a third assessment. This volume therefore carries a list of those who acted as first "readers" during the conference itself. The names of all who gave their opinions on the papers they chaired thus appear as a separate Special Editorial Board.

*Myth History and Memory* was the last of five in a sequence of rolling conferences which began in Barcelona in 2004 with *Landscapes of Exile*. The next convenor was Terri-ann White at the University of Western Australia under the title *Landscapes and Exiles: Belonging and Home* held in 2005 at New Norcia Monastery. The third conference in 2006 took place at Byron Bay and was organised by Baden Offord at Southern Cross University and Anna Haebich from Griffith University under the title *Landscapes of Exile: Australia Once Perilous, Now Safe*. The fourth conference organised by Peter Read and Frances Peters Little at the Australian National University and Anna Haebich from Griffith University was titled *Indigenous Auto/Biographies*

I owe a great debt of gratitude to the late Prof. Vin D'Cruz. As I sat in the back row of Baden Offord's splendid *Landscapes of Exile Conference: Australia Once Perilous Now Safe*, I found myself thrashing around for the title of what was to be the closing conference of the series. Vin and I had already put our heads together over the matter but I continued to be confronted by a

dead-end. I could not find a title which would allow me to include everything from both humanities and sciences. Vin passed across a note and there was the title: *Myth, History and Memory*. It was a gift, just what I was looking for. Vin smiled and said "I think it will do". It most certainly did, but Vin, as always, was modest about his contribution to the conference. He was to have come to Barcelona but, by then, his health had deteriorated considerably and I, personally, missed his presence enormously. However, he did send a paper which Terri-ann White read for him. Now, after his death, I feel that the inclusion of his article is an honour to his memory and to all who knew him and benefitted from his wisdom, generosity and on-going friendship. With regard to his article, I have refrained from formatting it or editing it in any way, preferring to leave it as he gave it to us. To tamper with the text would be to tamper with the powerful voice that came through to us all the day his paper was read. Similarly, I have decided to place Vin's paper as the closing article in this volume because his paper sums up so many of the concerns of those of us working within the area of Australian and South East Asian Studies and picks up many of the threads that wove themselves through the conference discussions.

I am also grateful to John Ryan who actually gave me the title for Vin D'Cuz's paper as it came to us untitled. Similarly I would like to acknowledge the unstinting work of Kate Russell as Assistant Editor. Without Kate's input this volume would have taken much longer in appearing.

As an editor, I do not believe in giving a breakdown of each paper. That, I believe, is the task of the reader; to dip into the volume at leisure and find their own discursive thread in the whole. The papers range over Australian and American Studies, Aboriginal Studies, Museum Curating, Philippine Myth, Fine Art, African Archaeological Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, Catalonian History, Creative Writing, The Chilean "funa" and Australia, Trauma Studies, Migrant Studies, Climatic Change, and others. Each article is unique in its perspective and range and this is what gave the conference such depth and interest. For four days there was an ongoing conversation between paper readers and their audience, an enriching dialectic backtracking as themes developed and rolled through the four day event. Such a dialogue was made possible given that the conference had no parallel sessions so no awkward choices had to be made and everyone went to the same conference but absorbed it in so many different ways. It is my firm belief that today academic conferences benefit from avoiding multiple sessions thus enabling a true engagement with subject matter under discussion. Of interest is the fact that many readers started reworking their papers on sight in a clear activation of a continuum of thought. Others picked a relevant phrase from somebody else's presentation or coffee discussion and incorporated it immediately into their paper or afterwards in hindsight in this volume.

The order of papers follows the order in which they were presented at the conference rather than alphabetically, in an attempt to show the discursive line which drove the event although not all papers are included.

It only remains for me to thank everybody who came, the student team who helped so unstintingly throughout the conference and, indeed, for months before and our sponsors without whom the conference could not have taken place.