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One of Us Buried – Johanna Craven

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Concubines, Wives and the Female Register

***One of Us Buried* by Johanna Craven**

The long history of sexual abuse faced by Australia's women

MELBOURNE, Australia: It's no surprise that Australia's women have been battling sexual abuse since long before rape allegations rocked the federal government, given how deeply the objectification of women is rooted in our convict past.

When Melbourne author Johanna Craven learnt about the horrifying treatment of prisoners at Parramatta's first female factory, she knew it would form the basis of her new novel, *One of Us Buried*.

Parramatta's "factory above the jail" operated from 1802 to 1821, and housed the female convicts rejected by settlers and soldiers seeking wives and housekeepers.

Women put to work at the factory were forced to find their own accommodation, and for many women, their only hope of doing so was to sell their bodies to the settlement's men.

In 1806, Samuel Marsden, the magistrate and assistant chaplain of the colony, set about cataloguing the women of New South Wales, labelling all women, with the exception of some widows, as either "wife" or "concubine".

Girls as young as twelve were listed as concubines, as were any women married in Catholic or Jewish services. Marsden's "female register" was duly sent back to England, and, with almost 75 per cent of women listed as concubines, it painted a picture of a colony rife with debauchery – a place where a woman's entire identity hinged on her sexuality, and the way she interacted with the men around her.

One can't help but wonder if we are still seeing the effects of this more than 200 years later.

About the Author: Johanna Craven is an award-winning author of six historical novels focusing on little-known areas of Australian and British history. Her work is published both independently and by London's Lume Books.

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