



# The Speculative Method: Using Guesswork and Narrative as Laboratory to 'Re-present' Past Lives

## Biography Workshop

National Centre of Biography (ANU)  
11am - 12:30 pm, Thursday 28  
October 2021

## Zoom Only Event

Meeting ID: 849 0058 9945  
Password: 630803  
Join Zoom Meeting: [https://  
anu.zoom.us/j/84900589945?](https://anu.zoom.us/j/84900589945?pwd=eHNDcTVxZmNZNlBmNnBOeEh0VW94Zz09)  
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Eh0VW94Zz09



What is speculative biography? How might writers and readers work with 'the speculative method'? In this presentation I speak to my chapters in a new Routledge edited collection on *Speculative Biography* (co-edited with Donna Lee Brien), which comprises a series of work-in-progress case studies that each interrogate how and why biographers use speculation to inform their imagination and 'represent' past lives. By tracing what nineteenth-century scientist William Whewell (1794–1866) called 'the speculative nature,' I compare the role of speculation in science and 'art,' suggesting that in biography, narrative has the capacity to function as a laboratory in which speculations are tested and refined as we inform our imaginations and create convincing characters and 'life worlds.' To explore these ideas, I will refer to my own work-in-progress case study, *Wild Love*, on the colonial painter and poet mystic and medium, Adelaide Ironside (1831-1867).

**Kiera Lindsey** is an ARC DECRA Fellow whose research is concerned with the intersections between creativity and history, imagination and speculation, the colonial and the uncanny. Her speculative biography *The Convict's Daughter* (Allen & Unwin 2016) was described as 'blazing a trail between history and fiction.' Her biography on Ironside will be published in 2022. Currently based at Griffith University and the University of New England, Kiera is Vice President of the History Council of NSW and a Senior Historian at Sue Hodges Productions (SHP).

All are welcome

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