

National Centre of Biography

Biography Workshop

Thursday 24 March 2016

At

12 midday in Coombs Seminar Room A

Doctoral studies as sites of hope, trauma and transformation in life writing: The memoirs of Sheila Fitzpatrick and Biff Ward.

Dr Chris Wallace

Crucibles of change in a subject's life are of particular interest to biographers. Doctoral studies are one such crucible. They can transform the lives of doctoral candidates intellectually, emotionally and materially, with consequential effects on those closest to them. Their quintessence is hope. Yet as historian Paul Robinson notes, 'graduate school is probably doomed to be an unhappy experience: you are no longer in the first blush of youth, yet you remain poor and dependent, even as your former undergraduate friends enter the adult world of work and domesticity.'



National Centre of Biography Visiting Fellow and Australian National Prime Ministers' Centre Fellow, Dr Chris Wallace, will consider doctoral studies as a crucible for change in the memoirs of historian Sheila Fitzpatrick and writer Biff Ward. Doctoral studies led each to move from Australia to Britain in the early 1960s. Fitzpatrick undertook a DPhil in Soviet History at the University of Oxford. Ward went as the young pregnant wife of historian husband and PhD scholarship-holder Ken, having earlier experienced life as the child of PhD candidate Russel Ward during his doctoral studies at ANU in the 1950s.